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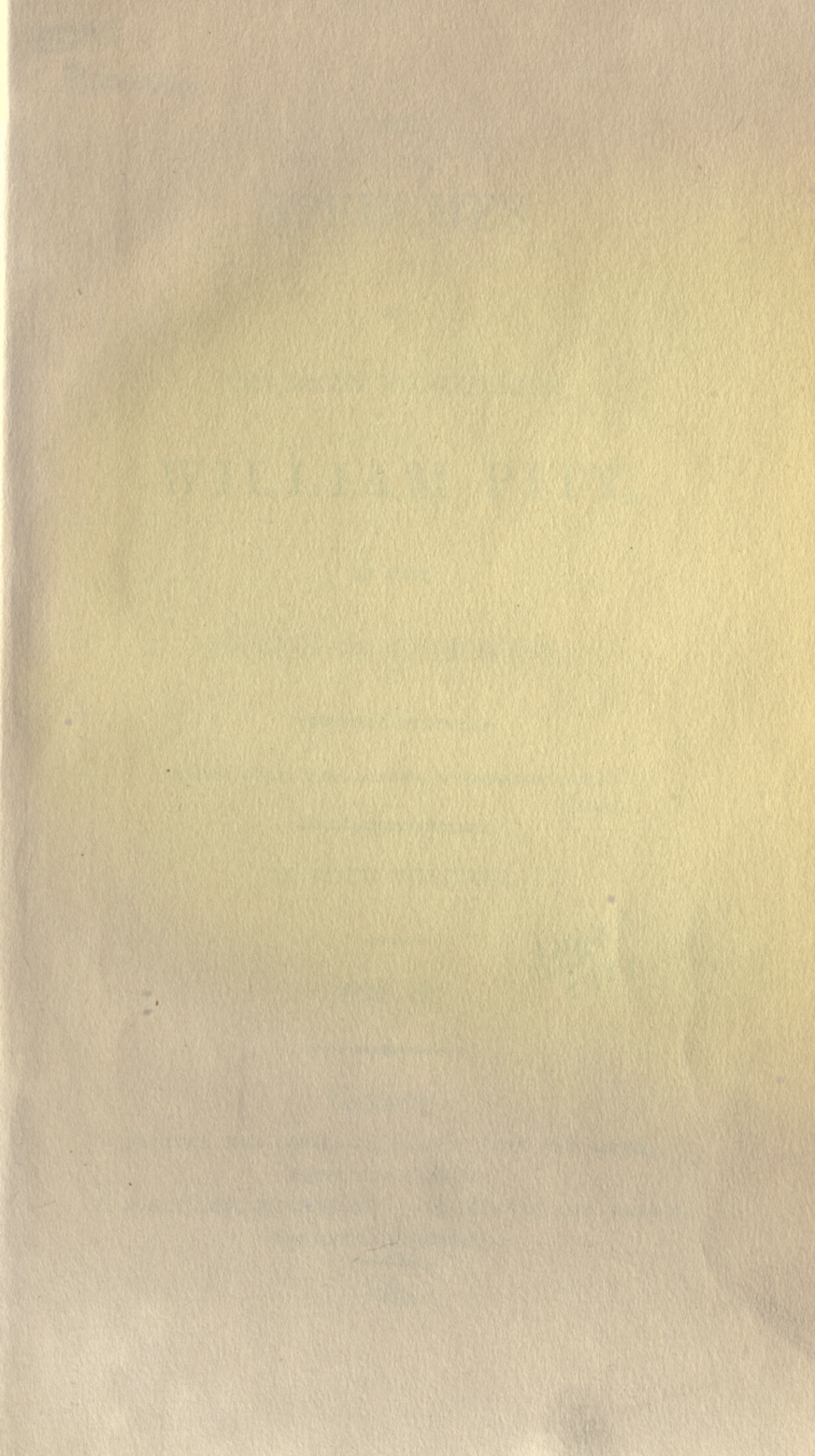


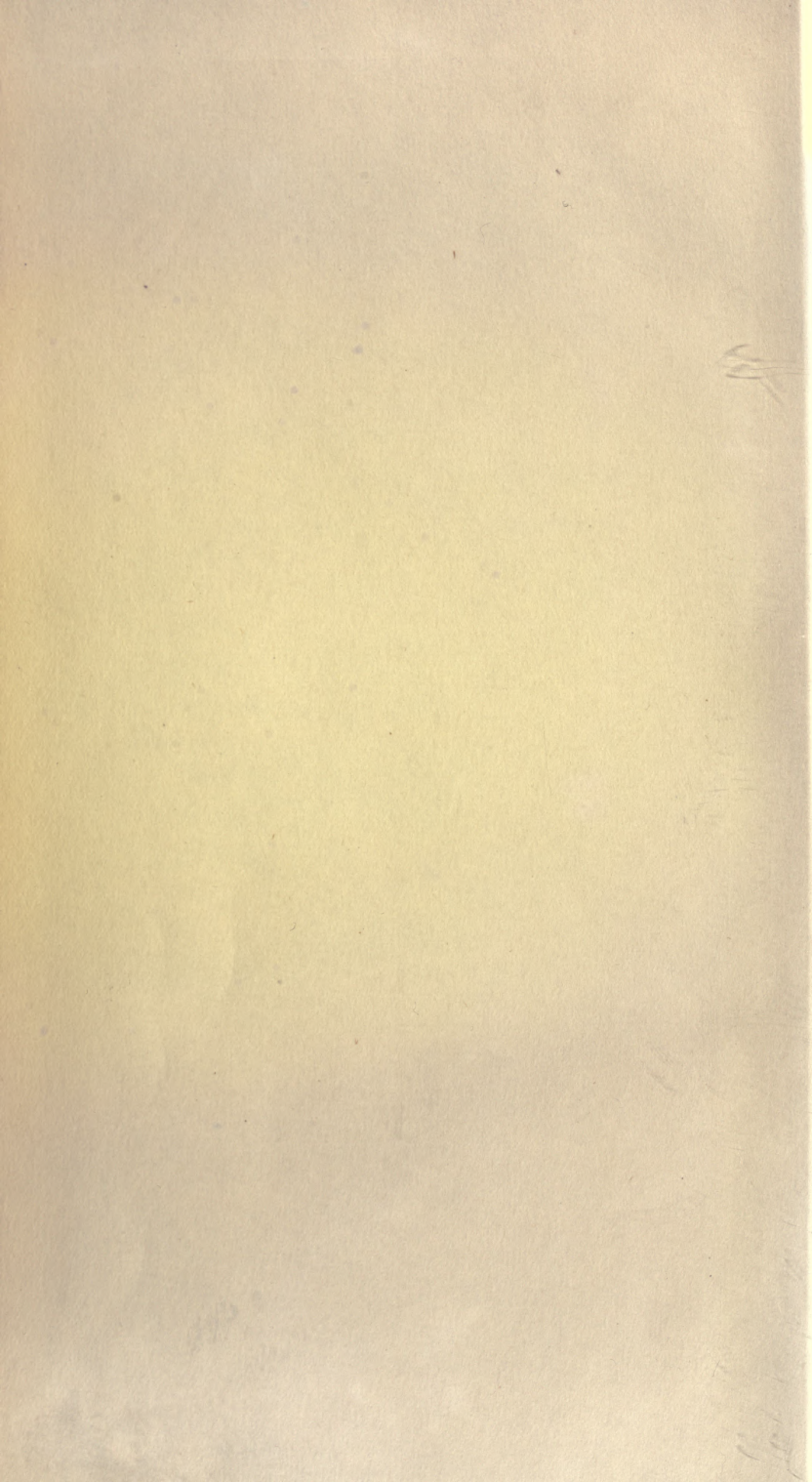














THE  
SPEECHES

OF  
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE  
WILLIAM PITT,  
IN THE  
HOUSE OF COMMONS.

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QUANTO MAGIS ADMIRAREMINI, SI AUDISSETIS IPSUM!

CICERO.

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IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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VOL. II.

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LONDON:

PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES AND ORME,  
PATERNOSTER-RROW;  
J. HATCHARD, PICCADILLY; AND BLACKS AND PARRY,  
LEADENHALL-STREET.

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# MR. PITT'S PARLIAMENTARY SPEECHES.

---

*December 22, 1790.*

**T**HE order of the day having been read, for the house to resolve itself into a committee of the whole house to consider the state of the impeachment of Warren Hastings, Esq., Sir Peter Burrell took the chair of the committee:—when Mr. Burke moved, “That it appears that an impeachment by this house, in the name of the commons of Great Britain in parliament assembled, and of all the commons of Great Britain, against Warren Hastings, Esq. late governor-general of Bengal, for sundry high crimes and misdemeanours, is now depending.”

Mr. Erskine opposed the motion, and, in order that a committee might be appointed to search for precedents, he moved, “that Sir Peter Burrell leave the chair;” upon which a debate ensued of very considerable length\*.

Mr. PITT, in rising, requested the attention of the committee in that early stage of the discussion, while he submitted to their consideration his solemn and deliberate opinion upon the question at issue, the decision of which involved in it considerations of the first magnitude; the rights and privileges of parliament were concerned, which must remain ever inviolably sacred, or

\* The parliament had this year been dissolved: and the question to be decided by this debate (which lasted by adjournments for three days) was, whether an impeachment brought by the commons of Great Britain in parliament assembled, in their own name, and in the name of their constituents, did not remain in *statu quo*, notwithstanding the intervention of a dissolution?

our valuable and excellent constitution was subverted and destroyed. Notwithstanding such display of ability, learning, and eloquence, on the part of the honourable gentleman opposite to him\*, his arguments, however ingeniously and forcibly urged, did not impress his mind with that conviction which effected any change in his sentiments upon the point in question. Precedents had been consulted, with the laborious industry, no doubt, of many months investigation, by several honourable and learned gentlemen; but those adduced, upon the present occasion, in favour of impeachments abating upon a dissolution of parliament, were in number so few, and of such questionable authority in his opinion, as clearly to evince the imbecility of the cause, without the most distant reflection upon the abilities of the learned advocates who supported it. After the most diligent and accurate investigation in his power, of the subject under discussion, after deliberating for a length of time upon almost every possible ground on which it might be argued, he was come prepared to deliver his sentiments, how far impeachments were affected by a dissolution of parliament.

The first point, he said, which claimed the attention of the house in discussing the subject under their consideration, was to ascertain if any evidence existed of an uniform established practice observed by both houses in their conduct of impeachments, which was to be considered as the law of parliament in such cases. If there were precedents which clearly established the point, that, from the usage of parliament, impeachments did abate by a dissolution, he would bow in silence to the authority, but would lose no time in providing a remedy against a practice whose tendency was hostile to the privileges of the house, and destructive of the liberties of the country. The authority of such precedents no one would say ought to be relied upon in preference to that of the fundamental principles of the constitution. But he was happy to find that there existed no evidence of such an uniform rule of parliamentary practice. From a dis-

\* Mr. Erskine.



passionate review of the different precedents, he was prepared to assert with confidence, and the sequel, he trusted, would abundantly justify the assertion, that impeachments did continue in *statu quo* from parliament to parliament, notwithstanding the precedents so much insisted upon by the honourable and learned gentleman in support of an abatement of such proceedings by a dissolution. That impeachments did not abate by a dissolution of parliament, was a principle sufficiently recognized and well established by many precedents in our history from the early times of antiquity. Cases perfectly in point might be adduced from the reigns of Richard the Second, and others; but he should only insist upon the case of the duke of Suffolk in the reign of Henry the Sixth, which indisputably proved that impeachments continued from one parliament to another. In his investigation of precedents, however, he did not mean to confine himself to the more doubtful decisions of antiquity, but should advance to more modern times, and advert to instances better ascertained and more applicable to his purpose. By the resolution of the lords in the year 1673, writs of error and petitions of appeal were made to continue from parliament to parliament; but it was contended, since no mention is made of impeachments in this resolution, that a dissolution of parliament operates an abatement of such proceedings. Now the very opposite conclusion was deducible from the report of the committee, which expressly stated that "writs of error, petitions of appeal, and other businesses of a judicial nature," ought not to be narrowed in their discussion, but to extend from parliament to parliament. Impeachments, therefore, as judicial proceedings, do not necessarily abate by a dissolution. But in the order of 1678, impeachments are expressly mentioned, in common with writs of error and petitions of appeal, to continue from one parliament to another.

To this precedent, however clear and decisive, objections are taken to invalidate its authority. First, it was affirmed to have been a very precipitate proceeding. But how can this objection apply? Did it refer to any new matter not included in the former resolution of 1673? Clearly not. This order was only

a deduction from the principles already laid down in the former decision ; it could not then be a precipitate measure. But the critical juncture of affairs, during the ferment of party violence and of civil contention, might probably, it was said, contribute materially to that resolution which authorized the continuance of impeachments. This objection, too, must vanish the moment the circumstances of the times when the decision in question took place, are contrasted with those of the subsequent period when it was rescinded. In 1678, the proceedings of the lords were not influenced by any particular reference to some matter then depending ; it was a general order, that writs of error, petitions of appeal, and impeachments, should survive a dissolution of parliament. Nor was this measure the production of any party violence or animosity ; it was an unanimous decision founded upon the resolution of 1673, to serve as a standing precedent for the conduct of future impeachments. But what was the case of the reversal of this decision in 1685, so much depended upon as a precedent in favour of the abatement of impeachments by a dissolution ? Was it not at the æra when James the Second, a bigoted and popish prince, had ascended the throne of these realms ; when the parliament was obsequiously devoted to the will of the monarch ; when the sacrifice of principle was required to be made to practical abuse by the prejudices of the times ; when certain popish lords were about to be solemnly impeached who were the supposed favourites of the king ? Under such circumstances, what was the conduct of parliament ? They very probably thought that compliance was better than resistance at such a period ; and therefore they determined, probably with the best intentions, to rid themselves of the impeachments in contemplation, by rescinding the order of 1678. The professed object of this reversal, then, was to screen the nobleman in question from the impending danger of impeachment. He then would ask, against which of the decisions the objection taken from the circumstances of the times applied most forcibly ; whether to the order of 1678, or to its reversal in 1685 ? Unquestionably the latter. The honourable and learned gentleman had



therefore ably and successfully argued against himself; since by this objection he had clearly proved the one decision a good precedent, but its reversal a bad one. So much for the precedent of 1685.

The next objection to the order of 1678 was taken from the case of Lord Stafford. But how could this instance invalidate the authority of the precedent in question? Because it afforded the learned gentleman an opportunity of appealing to the passions, that, from his eloquent and pathetic description of the trial, conviction, and execution of this unfortunate nobleman, the committee might infer the injustice of the principle of continuing impeachments. But was that a legitimate and conclusive argument? Would not such reasoning prove adverse to the cause he attempted to establish? For, admitting the parliament, in this instance, to have acted improperly by continuing an impeachment, might not another parliament be equally culpable in dispensing with the continuance of such a proceeding? Suppose a delinquent impeached, and the charges of crimination alleged against him gone through, a dissolution of parliament takes place; would it not prove the extremity of injustice to stay the proceedings in such a house, by which the defendant would be precluded from entering upon his defence, and judgment of crimination or acquittal could not pass without a renewal of the proceedings *de novo*? His innocence or guilt must remain a subject of much doubt and suspicion. Would it not therefore be infinitely more expedient and proper for the honour and reputation of both parties, that such proceedings, conducted by one parliament, should be resumed in *statu quo* by another? Upon such a liberal principle the accuser would have every fair opportunity of making good his charges; and the accused would have equal liberty to establish his defence. Nothing short of this procedure could deserve the name of public justice. What! because the fate of one nobleman, from the continuance of impeachment, was supposed hard and oppressive, did it therefore follow that the exercise of such a privilege of the commons in every instance, would be attended with the same obnoxious consequences? If

the abuse of an institution was a valid argument of its inutility, the objection might apply; otherwise the honourable and learned gentleman's pathetic expostulation would go for nothing; for in deciding upon the merit of a dry precedent, our passions ought not to interfere with our judicial deliberations. The validity of the order of 1678 stood therefore unimpeached; a precedent which neither eloquence nor sophistry can possibly invalidate.

The case of Lords Salisbury and Peterborough, adduced as a precedent in favour of an abatement of impeachments by a dissolution, is equally unfortunate; for there does not appear from the proceedings, any reference whatever, either to the order of 1685, or to any former decision upon the subject. The impeachment in question abated, not by virtue of any usage of parliament, but by the operation of an act of general pardon. The impeachment of Sir Adam Blair and others, did not apply; since no attempts were made to renew the prosecution, and they had been held to bail subsequent to a dissolution. Now, if the proceedings had abated in consequence of that event, the parties could not have been held to bail afterwards; the impeachment having determined, they must have been dismissed.—But as the proceedings were pending, unaffected by any dissolution, the parties were bound in a recognizance. The only just inference, therefore, from this case, clearly was, that impeachments did not abate in the manner it had been contended, by a dissolution of parliament. The same conclusion was evidently deducible from the impeachment of Lord Danby; for there cannot remain any doubt as to the sentiments then entertained by parliament; since he was clearly dismissed upon this principle, because the commons had declined the prosecution. Now three dissolutions of parliament had obtained before he was discharged. It was evident if a dissolution operated an abatement of impeachments, Lord Danby must have been dismissed upon the first dissolution; nay, he would have been, upon that principle, discharged of course. But the case was quite otherwise; for parliament was repeatedly dissolved, and Lord Danby was as often detained, until at length, the commons declining to prosecute, he was dis-



charged; so that the impeachment in question abated by the act of the commons, and not by the operation of a dissolution. In the cases of Lords Somers, Halifax, Portland, and the Duke of Leeds, impeachment abated in the same manner; the commons not prosecuting, the parties were severally discharged. Now, on which side of the question did the weight of evidence from precedents preponderate? Did not the scale fairly incline in favour of the continuance of impeachments from parliament to parliament? The right of the commons to prosecute an impeachment, until judgment was obtained, in his opinion, was clear, unequivocal, and indisputable, from the authority of such a body of precedents.

After investigating the evidence to be collected from precedents, the practice of parliament, during the last three years, was the next object of enquiry, in the present discussion. Parliament exercised two powers,—legislative and judicial, which had their separate and distinct limits and duration. The confusion of these powers was the principal source of all the doubts upon the present question. Lawyers had differed as much in their opinions respecting writs of error, and petitions of appeal, as upon impeachments; from such collision of opposite sentiments, much satisfaction could not be expected. A reference should, therefore, be made to the clear and established principle of the constitution, in order to remove every cloud of doubt or difficulty. Every act of legislation, it was well known, was terminated by prorogation, as well as by dissolution; but no judicial act was influenced by either. Impeachment, therefore, being a judicial proceeding, could not be affected by prorogation or dissolution. In the case of writs of error, and of petitions of appeal, the process continued from session to session, and from parliament to parliament: much more necessary was it that the proceedings in an impeachment should also continue; for in the one case, there was only one individual against another, but in the other, the house of commons, and all the commons of Great Britain, were parties against a state delinquent. The impeach-

ment in question was not the act of the late parliament, but of the whole commons of the realm ; the proceeding being in the name both of constituents and representatives. It had been asked, if the house of commons, in this instance, were the attorneys of the people ? In one sense they were considered as agents, consulting their own judgment and discretion, in the protection of the interests of their constituents. But they were not the attorneys of the people, as agents delegated with power to act merely by the instructions of their constituents. Such an acceptance of the term should have his heartiest abhorrence and reprobation. An impeachment had been commenced by the commons in the persons of their late representatives ; such a proceeding ought not to be discontinued without due enquiry and deliberation ; for the house stood in a similar situation with the successor of the king's attorney-general, in the present instance, who was always required to proceed with all the trials already commenced on the part of the king. But in law, it was said, there was no such body as the commons of England recognized : but would any one draw such an absurd inference from an accidental omission, that such a body had no real existence, which was to be regarded as the principal object of legislation in every civilized country ? Our ancestors had, in their accustomed wisdom, sufficiently, in his opinion, guarded against such a supposed solecism in politics ; by ordering all supplies to be granted in the name of the commons, as well as all impeachments to be laid in their name ; when once a proceeding, therefore, assumed a judicial form, its existence no longer depended upon the persons who were immediately concerned in its institution. The house of commons were only the legal organ of instituting impeachments, as the attorney-general was of filing an information *ex officio*, or an indictment in the name of the king. The public prosecutors in the one case were the commons of the realm, and the king was the prosecutor in the other. From the consideration of the capacity in which the house, as a judicial and not a legislative body, acted in the conduct of impeachments, it there-



fore followed, that their proceedings, by the constitution, could not abate or be affected either by a prorogation or a dissolution of parliament.

His next ground of evidence in the discussion of the question, to which he requested the attention of the committee, should be taken from the decisions of the courts of justice, and the authority of eminent lawyers. The authority of the great and venerable Lord Hale was to be distrusted in the present instance, since writs of error, petitions of appeal, and impeachments, were considered by him as legislative, and not judicial proceedings. Now, all the legislative proceedings unquestionably abated by prorogation as well as dissolution; but impeachments, writs of error, and petitions of appeal are judicial proceedings which continue from session to session, and from parliament to parliament. The error of Lord Hale proceeded from his confounding the legislative with the judicial power in parliamentary proceedings. This mistatement appeared from a passage which he here read to the committee, in which writs of error, petitions of appeal, and impeachments, were said to abate, as well by prorogation as dissolution. Lord Holt entertained a different opinion upon the subject, since he had argued from the case of Lord Stafford, as a weighty and irrefragable precedent in favour of the continuances of impeachments and other judicial proceedings, from one parliament to another. Lord chief baron Commyns, an authority of the highest respectability in the courts of justice, was also decided in his opinion upon the subject; for, from a passage which he read out of his Digest, it appeared not only that impeachments continued, but that they should be resumed and prosecuted, until judgment was obtained, notwithstanding any contingent interruptions from either prorogation or dissolution. The authority of the legislature too, in the preamble to an act of the 13th of the king, by implication, was also favourable to the point he endeavoured to establish; besides many cases from Carthew's Reports, and other authorities, might be adduced, which abundantly proved it had been long held that impeachments were

not affected by the operation of a dissolution. If such proceedings had abated, in consequence of such an event, it was evident that the course of public justice would be greatly interrupted. But there was neither precedent nor law which authorized such a deduction; and the continuance of impeachments was frequently rendered indispensably necessary, in order to produce a salutary operation, and to guard against their abuse. If impeachments were allowed to be a branch of the judicial power, they must necessarily have the same operation with the other acts of that power. Writs of error, petitions of appeal, as judicial acts, survived prorogation and dissolution; so also ought impeachments. To admit the continuance of the former, and to insist upon the abatement of the latter, by the operation of a dissolution, were the grossest absurdity: since, as judicial proceedings, they were branches of the same power, and their connection depended upon a permanent union of principle. Those who insisted upon the abatement of impeachments, were consistent, if they also insisted upon the abatements of writs of error and petitions of appeal; but when once the continuance of the latter was allowed, and the abatement of the former contended for, in consequence of a dissolution, then it was evident that impeachments were made, in one instance, a branch of the judicial power, and in another, an act of the legislative, to serve some particular purpose. Now such confusion of the two parliamentary powers he had noticed, should be studiously avoided, lest their proceedings were impeded by endless doubts and difficulties, and might terminate in a great oppression and injustice to individuals, and eventually tend to subvert our excellent constitution. The power of impeachments is a privilege of the first consequence to the liberties of the country; it operated as a salutary check upon those in administration, and effectually guarded against every undue influence of the crown, in the protection of state delinquency. Ought the event of an impeachment, then, to depend upon the operation of a dissolution? No. If the exercise of this power were once to be influenced by such an event, there would be an



end put to official responsibility; the most flagrant acts of corruption, oppression, and injustice, would pass with impunity; for the party impeached might procure, by his own interest, or the influence of his friends, a dissolution of parliament, in order to escape the punishment his offences might justly deserve. Voluntary exilement were, indeed, too heavy a punishment for injured innocence to endure, to avoid an unjust impeachment; but for the guilty delinquent to enjoy such an indulgence, would be no punishment, but rather a reward, for his villainy. The abatement of impeachments, therefore, by a dissolution of parliament, would throw an insurmountable obstacle in the way of public justice, and would deprive the house of a power the most formidable to a corrupt administration, whose exercise served as a shield and bulwark for the constitution.

As to the honourable and learned gentleman's objection, that no man can be a judge, *de jure*, in a court, without a competent knowledge of the whole proceedings; this was true, in an inferior court of judicature, but was not applicable to the house of lords: for this supreme court of judicature was liable perpetually to change its members in consequence of death, which naturally produced others as their successors. Supposing the new members were ignorant of the proceedings already had of the impeachment depending, what inconvenience could arise from that circumstance, when copies of the whole evidence were printed? They need only refer for the requisite information to the journals. They had a right to judge from the minutes, upon the fidelity and accuracy of which they might always depend, since they were distributed not only among those peers who were present at the taking of the evidence, but among those who were absent, for their information. An impeachment was an extraordinary case, which did not admit of being conducted upon the same rules with an inferior court of judicature. In the one case, judgment was formed upon printed evidence; but in the other, *vivâ voce* evidence was certainly requisite. Were the rules of the court of king's bench

to obtain in the house of lords, the question would be wholly at an end, and the right of impeachment at once annihilated; since it were better to file an indictment in the one, than prefer an impeachment in the other. But the foundation of impeachments was, to bring delinquents to justice, who would have escaped if tried according to the ordinary rules of the courts of judicature. The practice of the house of lords was incompatible with that of the other courts, in regard to *viva voce* evidence and decision, without separating. Notes were in constant practice, and written evidence consulted, without which it were impossible, in cases of impeachment, to reduce under one view the whole body of the evidence; for there were few instances in which impeachments did not occupy some days; written evidence were then as indispensable in a trial of ten days as of three years. But it was said, that in a long impeachment, in consequence of the constant change of members in the house of lords, some who had been accusers, became judges. In reply, he observed, that there was no period of prorogation to which the same objection would not apply. The members who were so circumstanced, certainly could not be deprived of their judicial powers; at the same time, the exercise and application of those powers remained at the sole disposal of their own feelings and consciences. It was an unavoidable circumstance incidental to the nature of such a proceeding as an impeachment, from which no danger of injustice could be apprehended, with any shadow of reason.

He should, he said, wave for the present, every consideration of the enquiry how far the house of commons were disabled from proceeding in the impeachment depending, as it remained a subject for future investigation. When it was once established that the right of impeachment did not abate by dissolution, the discretion of the house would next determine whether it were expedient to prosecute the impeachment in question any farther; or what other line of conduct to pursue in regard to such a proceeding. Of this he was very sure, that no fair objection could be urged, from any defect of information. The court in



which the trial had been conducted, was accessible to all; all the reports and papers respecting the evidence, were open to general inspection; so that it was entirely at the option not only of every member of the house of commons, but also of every British subject, to remain in ignorance of any part of the proceedings. He wished it to be understood by all, as an established and incontrovertible principle, that impeachments continued in *statu quo*. A contrary mode of proceeding would be attended with consequences destructive of the privileges of the house, as well as injurious and prejudicial to the cause of the party accused. If an offence, for instance, were committed, the conviction of which required a proceeding by impeachment, upon the eve of a dissolution of parliament, the prosecution might be postponed until the meeting of a new parliament, in order to avoid a repetition of the proceedings; the consequence naturally to be apprehended was, the escape of the delinquent. If, on the other hand, an impeachment had been carried on for such a considerable length of time, as to exceed a dissolution of parliament, the repetition of the proceedings in that case might materially impede the progress of other public business. The death of a witness, in the mean time, might very considerably too affect the state of the evidence; and an impeachment, by this mode of proceeding, might be converted into an engine of oppression and injustice. Suppose the party impeached to have made some progress in his defence, his accusers might possess sufficient influence to procure a sudden dissolution of parliament; the consequence might be, a fresh accusation against him, fabricated out of his own defence. By such a nefarious proceeding, an individual might continue to be the object of a public prosecution all his life-time, without the possibility of the means of being pronounced either innocent or guilty. Thus, an impeachment must continue in *statu quo* after a dissolution, or the privileges of parliament must suffer violence, and the cause of the accused sustain irreparable injury, and intolerable oppression. He was clearly decided in his opinion, therefore, from the weight of precedents, from the principles of the constitu-

tion, from the authority of the greatest luminaries of the law, from the immutable principles of justice, from the expediency of public trials, and from every argument of plain common sense, that impeachments not only continued unaffected by a dissolution of parliament, but existed in *statu quo*, notwithstanding the operation of such an event; he therefore would vote, with cheerful confidence, for the original motion of the right honourable gentleman, that the impeachment of Warren Hastings, esq. was now depending.

On a division, there appeared,

For the Speaker's leaving the chair - - - - 50

Against it - - - - - 143

The original motion was then carried.

---

April 19, 1791.

DEBATE, in a committee of the whole house, on Mr. Wilberforce's motion "for instructing the chairman to move for leave to bring in a bill to prevent the further Importation of Slaves into the British colonies in the West Indies."

MR. PITT declared, that from the first hour of his having had the honour to sit in parliament, down to the present, among all the questions, whether political or personal, in which it had been his fortune to take a share, there never had been one in which his heart was so deeply interested as the present; both on account of the serious principles which it involved, and the important consequences connected with it. He observed, that however forcibly he might appeal to the natural and unerring feelings of every man upon this subject, and however strong an argument he might, therefore, draw, even from this consideration, yet this was not the ground on which he was about to rest the determination of the present question.

The present was not a mere question of feeling; it was not for the sake of exercising humanity, as had been often falsely imagined, that the abolition of the trade in slaves was pressed upon the committee; but it was quite another principle, which ought,



in his own opinion, to determine their minds. The main argument insisted on was, that the slave-trade was founded in injustice; and it is therefore, (said Mr. Pitt,) such a trade, as it is impossible for me to support, unless gentlemen will, in the first place, prove to me, that there are no laws of morality binding upon nations, and that it is no duty of a legislature to restrain its subjects from invading the happiness of other countries, and from violating the fundamental principles of justice.

He observed, that many gentlemen, however, who opposed the motion, had brought forward, on the present occasion, a plea of impracticability. Several of them had even expressed a desire to see the slave-trade abolished, if it were not for some necessity for continuing it, which they conceived to exist; nay, almost every one, he believed, and in particular an honourable baronet\*, and another honourable gentleman†, appeared to wish, that the farther importation of slaves might cease, provided it could be made out that the population of the West Indies could be, by any means, maintained without it.

Mr. Pitt proposed, therefore, with the-permission of the house, to apply himself particularly to this subject; for as this appeared to operate, in the minds of so many gentlemen, as the chief objection, he trusted, that, by shewing this argument to be groundless, and the whole idea of impracticability, as it was now urged, to be entirely a misconception, he should be able thus to clear away every obstacle whatever; so that, having no ground, either of justice or necessity, to stand upon, there could be no excuse or pretence left to the committee, for resisting the present motion.

He might reasonably hope, however, that gentlemen, even upon their own grounds, would not reckon any disadvantage to the plantations, which was merely small and temporary, to be a sufficient reason to warrant the continuance of the slave-trade. It was surely not any slight degree of expediency, any small balance of profit, nor any light shades of probability, on the one

\* Sir William Young,

† Mr. Stanley, agent for the islands.

side, rather than the other, that would determine any gentleman in the present question. He asked pardon even for the supposition. The house, he was sure, would not decide the question, on such grounds. The slave-trade was an evil of such a magnitude, that there must be a common wish in the committee at once to put an end to it, if there were no very great and serious obstacle. Nothing short of the utmost danger, nay of ruin, to the West-India islands, ought we to hear urged as a plea for continuing such a trade as this. It was a trade by which multitudes of unoffending nations were deprived of the blessings of civilization, and had their peace and happiness invaded. It ought, therefore, to be no common expediency; it ought either to be some positive necessity, or, at least, something very like necessity, which it became those gentlemen to plead, who took upon them to defend the continuance of this trade.

He knew that the West-India gentleman had used very strong language, on this part of the subject, and had expressed an alarm for the islands that was very serious indeed. It would be proper, however, for the committee to consider this for themselves; for he could not help thinking, there was an over-great degree of sensibility, among those gentlemen, on this particular point, and that their alarm, as he hoped to prove, was excited in a way which the occasion by no means justified. He had endeavoured carefully and impartially to examine into this himself, and he would now proceed to lay those reasons before the house, which induced him firmly to believe, not only that no permanent mischief would follow from the abolition, but not even any such temporary hurt or inconvenience as could be stated to be a reason for preventing the house from agreeing to the question before them: on the contrary, that the abolition itself would lay the foundation for the more solid improvement of all the various interests of those colonies.

In proceeding upon this subject, he should apply his observations chiefly to Jamaica, which contained more than half the slaves in the whole West Indies; and, if he should succeed in proving that no material detriment could arise to the population



of that island, this would be so considerable a part of the question, and would afford so strong a presumption with respect to the other islands, it being a tolerably fair sample of the whole, that the house could not any longer hesitate whether they should or should not put a stop to this most horrid trade.

In the twenty years ending in 1788, the annual loss of slaves in Jamaica (that is, the excess of deaths above the births) appeared to be one in one hundred; in a preceding period the loss was greater, and in a period before that greater still, there having been a continual gradation in the decrease through the whole time, as appeared from an accurate examination of the particular years in each period. It might fairly be concluded, therefore, that (the average loss of the last period being one per cent.) the loss in the former part of it would be somewhat more, and in the latter part somewhat less than one per cent.; inasmuch that it might be fairly questioned whether, by this time, the births and deaths in Jamaica might not be stated as very nearly equal. It was to be added, that a peculiar calamity, which swept away 15,000 persons, had occasioned a part of the mortality in the last-mentioned period. The check to the provision trade, occasioned by the independence of America, had also been urged, by the West-India gentlemen, as a cause of more than common depopulation in the same time: whether this had really operated to so great an extent as had been stated, he could not exactly say; but he was clear that this also was an evil which might not be expected to return, as a very considerable culture of provisions in the islands had now happily taken place. It was plain, then, even on these grounds only, nay, even if the apparent loss had been, as some statements made it, more than one per cent., the probable loss now to be expected must be very inconsiderable indeed.

There was, however, one circumstance to be added, which the West-India gentlemen, in stating this matter, had entirely overlooked, and which was so material as clearly to reduce the probable diminution in the population of Jamaica down to nothing, supposing even that all the observations he had just been making

were entirely to fail him. The circumstance he meant was this: In all the calculations he had referred to of the comparative number of births and deaths, *all* the negroes in the island were included; those newly-imported negroes, who died in consequence of the seasoning, made a part, and swelled, therefore, very materially the number of the deaths; but as these extraordinary deaths would cease as soon as the importation ceased, there ought to be a deduction of them made from his present calculation.

Now, this number would make up of itself nearly the whole of that one per cent. which had been stated, laying aside all the other considerations. He particularly pressed the attention of gentlemen to this circumstance; for it was undoubtedly the fact, that the complaint of being likely to want hands in Jamaica arose from the mistake of including the present unnatural deaths caused by the seasoning among the natural and perpetual causes of mortality. These deaths, being erroneously taken into the planters' calculations, gave occasion to the idea that the number could not be kept up. These deaths, which were caused merely by the slave-trade, furnished the very ground, therefore, on which the continuance of the slave-trade was thought necessary, and became the very reason for bringing over more of those wretched negroes, and for thus adding to this very source of mortality.

The evidence before the house as to this point was perfectly clear; for it would be found in that dreadful catalogue of deaths, in consequence of the seasoning, and the middle passage, which the house had been condemned to look into, that one half die. An annual mortality of 2,000 in Jamaica might be charged, therefore, to the importation, which, compared with the whole numbers on the island, hardly fell short of the whole one per cent. decrease.

Joining this with all the other considerations, Mr. Pitt then asked, Can the decrease of slaves in Jamaica be such—Can the colonies be so destitute of means—so incapable of those improvements which a more prudent management, and a spirit of



benevolence must naturally furnish—Can they, at a time when they tell you of new regulations to benefit the slaves, which, they say, are establishing every day—can they, under all these circumstances, be permitted to plead that total impossibility of keeping up their number, which they have rested on, as being indeed the only possible pretext for allowing fresh importations from Africa? He appealed, therefore, to the sober judgment of every gentleman in the house, Whether an interest on the part of Jamaica, such as he had described, could form an objection, or justify a hesitation, in agreeing to the present motion.

It might be observed also, that, when the importation should stop, that disproportion between the sexes, which was one of the obstacles to population, would gradually diminish, and indeed our whole colonies in the West Indies would revert to that natural order and course of things by which population and civilization are promoted. Through the want of this natural order, a thousand grievances were created, which it was impossible to define, and which it was in vain to think that, under such circumstances, we could cure. He was convinced that the abolition itself would work this effect. The West-Indians would then feel a near and urgent interest, to enter into a thousand little details which it was impossible for him to describe, but which have the greatest influence on population. A foundation would thus be laid for the general welfare of the islands, a new system would rise up, the reverse of the old, and eventually both their general wealth and general happiness would increase.

This, however, it should be remembered, was proving far more than he was bound to prove, with a view to the present question; for gentlemen must feel, that if even he could prove the abolition not ruinous, it would be enough. He could give up, therefore, three arguments out of four, through the whole that he had said, and yet have enough left to establish his position. As to the Creoles, it was a plain point that they would increase; they differed in this entirely from the imported slaves, who were both a burthen and a curse to themselves and others. The measure now proposed would operate like a charm, and

besides stopping all the miseries we give occasion to in Africa and the middle passage, would produce even more benefits in the West Indies than legal regulations could do.

One thing he must touch upon, which was rather a delicate point; the question of emancipating the slaves in the West Indies. A rash emancipation, he was clear, would be wrong and mischievous: In that unhappy situation to which our baneful conduct had brought both ourselves and them, it would be no justice on either side to give them liberty. They were as yet incapable of it, but gradually their situation might be mended. They might be relieved from every thing harsh and severe, raised from their present degradation, and put under the powerful protection of law: till then, to talk of emancipation was insanity. But it was the system of fresh importations that interfered with these principles of improvement, and it was the abolition of the slave-trade which would furnish the means of effectually regulating the situation of the slaves in the islands. This was not a warm idea, taken up without due reasoning and reflection, but had its foundation in human nature: Wherever there was the incentive of honour, credit, and fair profit, there industry would be; and when these labourers should have the natural springs of human action afforded them, they would then rise to the level of human industry; but when degraded into mere machines, they would not even afford you all the benefit of machines, but become more unprofitable, and every way more disadvantageous, than any other instrument of labour whatsoever.

Mr. Pitt then proceeded to some short observations on each of the other islands, as there were some circumstances of difference between them. In Barbadoes there had been no decrease to alarm us; on the contrary, the slaves in that island seemed rather to increase. In St. Kitt's, the decrease for 14 years had been but 3-4ths per cent.; and here many of the same observations would apply, as he had been using in the case of Jamaica. In Antigua, a considerable number had died by a particular calamity; but for this, the decrease would have been



really trifling. In Nevis and Montserrat there was this strong and most favourable circumstance, that there was little or no disproportion of sexes, and it might well be hoped the numbers would be kept up. In Dominica, some controversy had arisen about the calculation; but he had to observe, that Governor Orde mentions that there is an increase of births above the deaths. From Grenada and St. Vincent's, no good accounts had been transmitted, in answer to the queries sent them; but they were probably not in circumstances less favourable than the other islands, though perhaps it might be found, that persons who had proceeded on recent grants might be entitled to our consideration; but whether their case was separated from the others or not, it never could be argued that they ought to stand in the way of the great object before the house.

On a full review of the probable state of the negro population in our West-India islands, was there then any serious ground of alarm from the measure of abolishing the slave-trade, of abolishing it entirely and immediately? And was there any of that impracticability to be pleaded, on which alone so many gentlemen had rested all their objections? Must we not blush at pretending that it would distress our consciences to abolish this most horrid trade, on account of the alarming consequences to the population of the islands?

Intolerable were the mischiefs of this trade, both in its origin, and through every stage of its progress. The honourable gentleman \* near him had been describing Africa as a continent half cultivated. In such a country, in order to promote this trade, you must apply yourselves to the avarice and to the worst passions of the princes. To say that slaves can be furnished us by fair and commercial means, were absurd and ridiculous. The trade sometimes ceased, as during the last war; sometimes the demand increased, sometimes it was declining, according to our circumstances. But how was it possible that, to a demand so extremely fluctuating, the supply of slaves should always ex-

\* Colonel Phipps.

actly accommodate itself? Alas! alas! (said Mr. Pitt,) we make human beings the subjects of commerce; we learn to talk of them as such; yet we will not allow to them the common principle of commerce, that the supply must accommodate itself to the consumption. It was not from wars then that the slaves were chiefly furnished. They were obtained in proportion as they were wanted. If a demand for slaves arose, a supply was forced in one way or other, and it was in vain, overpowered as we now were with positive evidence, as well as the reasonableness of the supposition, to deny, that, by the slave-trade, we were the causes of those dreadful enormities on that unhappy continent. It was plain, if we consider the number annually carried off, that no regular or ordinary means could furnish so many captives.

It was said by an honourable baronet \*, that if we did not take them, they would be destroyed; but this he did not believe, because he did not find, from all his reading, that the destruction of their captives was the common practice, as had been stated, of all uncivilized nations. We assumed, therefore, what was false; the very selling them implied this; for if they would sell their captives for profit, why should they not employ them in any labour that would yield a profit, for the same reason? Nay, many of them, while there was no demand from the slave-merchants, were often actually so employed. The wealth of the richer people in Africa was reckoned to consist in slaves, and how could we suppose they would be so absurd, then, as to destroy them? Besides, the trade had been suspended during the war, and it was never said, or thought, that any such consequence had then followed. But even if, instead of the present pitiless transportations, some few lives should be actually destroyed; if at the first they, with the guilt on their heads, should put some few prisoners to death, it was clear, in his opinion, that we ought not to make this any reason for persisting in the trade. The duration of this evil that was dreaded, would be short; by degrees the interest of humanity would work its own way, if our perverted system did not obstruct its course.

\* Sir W. Young.



It had been argued, by the honourable baronet, that selling men for witchcraft was no consequence of the slave-trade, for that witchcraft commonly implied poison, and was a real punishable crime. But was it recollected, that in the case of witchcraft or poison, it was not the individual only, but man, woman and child, every connection and relation of the guilty person, that were sold for slaves? Which principle of injustice and cruelty was promoted most undoubtedly by the slave-trade. The truth was, that we stopped the natural progress of civilization; we cut off Africa from the opportunity of improvement; we kept down that continent in a state of darkness, bondage, ignorance, and blood. Was not this an awful consideration for this country? Look on the map of Africa; how little useful intercourse had been established in that vast continent! While other countries were assisting and enlightening each other, *that* alone had none of these benefits. We had obtained as yet only just so much knowledge of its productions, as to shew that there is a capacity for trade, which we check. Indeed, if the mischiefs in Africa were out of the question, the circumstances of the middle passage alone would, in his mind, be reason enough for the abolition. Such a scene as that of the slave ships, passing over with their wretched cargoes to the West Indies, if it could be spread before the eyes of the house, would be sufficient of itself to make them vote at once for this question. And when it can be added also, that the interest even of the West Indies themselves rests on the abolition of this trade, Mr. Pitt said he could not conceive an act of more indispensable duty than that which was now proposed to the house. If even the consequences had appeared to him widely different from what they did appear, still he should insist that the house ought to give the same vote. What an aggravation then of guilt would it be, if the policy, instead of being against the measure, was also for it! A more imperious duty than that of abolishing the slave-trade, he believed, was never exercised in the parliament of Great Britain.

The motion was negatived,

Ayes ..... 88

Noes ..... 163

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*February 17, 1792.*

THE house having resolved itself into a committee of the whole house, (of which the Earl of Mornington was chairman,) to consider of so much of his Majesty's speech on the opening of the session, as related to the Public Revenue and Expenditure; the following paragraphs from the speech were read:

"It will, I am persuaded, give you great satisfaction to learn, that the extraordinary expences incurred in the course of the last year have, in a great measure, been already defrayed by the grants of the session. The state of our resources will, I trust, be found more than sufficient to provide for the remaining part of these expences, as well as for the current service of the year, the estimates for which I have directed to be laid before you.

"I entertain the pleasing hope, that the reductions which may be found practicable in the establishments, and the continued increase in the revenue, will enable you, after making due provision for the several branches of the public service, to enter upon a system of gradually relieving my subjects from some part of the existing taxes; at the same time giving additional efficacy to the plan for the reduction of the national debt, on the success of which our future ease and security essentially depend.

"With a view to this important object, let me also recommend it to you to turn your attention to the consideration of such measures as the state of the funds and of public credit may render practicable and expedient, towards a reduction in the rate of interest of any of the annuities which are now redeemable."

Mr. PITT then rose, and addressed the committee as follows:

Lord Mornington—The paragraph in his Majesty's speech which has been referred to this committee, has already announced to us, and to the public, the most welcome intelligence which it was possible for us to receive; it has raised the pleasing expectation, that, after all the difficulties with which we have struggled, the period is at length arrived, when, by the flourishing state of our finances, we may be enabled to enter on a system which will afford immediate and substantial relief to a



large proportion of our constituents, and at the same time give additional security and effect to that important, and, I trust, inviolable system which has been adopted for the reduction of the national debt.

In proceeding to detail the measures which I shall propose with a view to these important objects, I shall consider it as my first and most indispensable duty to state, as distinctly as possible, every circumstance which can be necessary for enabling all who hear me, not only to form a satisfactory judgment on the general result of our situation, but to examine the various calculations and reasonings on which that result is founded; and in attempting to execute so extensive a task, it is no small relief to my mind to reflect, that the repeated discussions which have taken place on questions of finance, have rendered them, in a great degree, familiar to the house and to the public; and that, by the measures which have been adopted for simplifying the nature and form of the public accounts, they are at length freed from that obscurity and intricacy in which they were formerly involved, and are rendered so clear and intelligible, that there is no man who may not, with a small degree of attention, become as fully master of the subject, as those whose official duty has led them to make it their peculiar study.

The first point to which I wish to call the attention of the committee, is the amount of what may be considered as the probable future income of the country; and I will begin by recapitulating the result of the accounts for different years, which have been already stated. The produce of the permanent taxes in the last year, from the 5th of January, 1791, to the 5th of January, 1792, appears to have been 14,132,000*l.*; which, with the addition of 2,558,000*l.*, (being the average amount of the annual duties on land and malt, as stated by the select committee last year,) would make the total revenue of the year 16,690,000*l.* To this there must be added a sum, which, in the accounts on the table, has been included in the produce of the separate and temporary taxes imposed last year, for the purpose

of defraying the expense of the Spanish armament, but which, in fact, makes part of the general and permanent revenue. It will be recollected that an addition was made last year to the duties on bills and receipts, and the addition was consolidated with the old duty. The whole of this consolidated duty has been carried to the account of the separate fund; but only the excess beyond the former produce can be considered as arising from the additional duty; and a sum equal to the former produce, being about 40,000*l.*, is to be added to the other sums which I have stated, making the total revenue for the last year 16,730,000*l.*

The produce of the year preceding was 16,437,000*l.* after deducting the produce of a fifty-third week, which was included in the account of that year.

The principal branches of the revenue being paid from the respective offices into the exchequer, by weekly payments, on a stated day, a fifty-third weekly payment in the course of a year, recurs nearly in the proportion of once in every period of six years. In judging therefore of the probable future amount of the revenue, the produce of the fifty-third week ought not to be included in any one particular year, and it is therefore here deducted; but, on the other hand, one-sixth part of its amount, being about 32,000*l.*, ought to be added to the average formed on any number of years. The average formed on the two last years, without this addition, would be 16,583,000*l.*, and with it 16,615,000*l.*

The produce of the year ending on the 5th of January, 1790, was 15,991,000*l.*, and the average of the last three years (making the same allowance for the fifty-third week) amounts to 16,418,000*l.*

If we look back still one year further, the produce of the year ending the 5th of January, 1789, was 15,565,000*l.*, and the average formed on the last four years, amounts to 16,212,000*l.*

It appears therefore that the actual produce of the year 1791, being 16,730,000*l.*, exceeds by above 500,000*l.* the average



formed on the last four years;—that it exceeds the average formed on the last two years by above 100,000*l.*,—the average on the last three years by nearly 300,000*l.*, and the actual produce of the last year but one, by nearly the same sum.

If then I form my calculation of our future revenue, not on the separate amount of any one of these particular years, but upon the average amount of four years, during which there has been a constant increase, I am certainly not attempting to lead you into too favourable an opinion; but I am rather wishing to recommend that degree of caution, which the importance of the subject always deserves, and particularly at the present moment, when we are holding out hopes of relief, in which, above all things, we should be careful to avoid the chance of disappointment. I propose therefore to rest my computation upon this average produce of four years, being 16,212,000*l.*, and this sum, on a general view of the subject, we may safely assume, as not being likely to exceed the permanent annual revenue of the country.

I shall next desire the committee to compare the statement of the annual revenue, with that of the permanent annual expenditure; and I shall take as the basis of this comparison, the estimates contained in the report of the committee appointed in the last session to examine the public income and expenditure, only making such corrections as arise from certain additions on the one hand, and reductions on the other, which at that time were not foreseen. The whole permanent expenditure as stated by the committee, (including therein the interest of the national debt, the million annually issued for the reduction of debt, the civil list, and all the permanent charges on the consolidated fund, as well as all the establishments which are annually voted) is 15,969,000*l.*; to which there was added in the course of the last session (but subsequent to the report of the committee) the sum of 12,000*l.* charged on the consolidated fund, for the establishment of his Royal Highness the Duke of Clarence; and a further sum of about 12,000*l.* for defraying

the expense of the separate government of the province of Upper Canada. Besides this, some further provision will be necessary for the establishment of his Royal Highness the Duke of York, on the happy event of his marriage ; and this may probably occasion an addition of 18,000*l*.

The amount of these additional charges is 42,000*l*.

I have next to state those reductions which, as far as we can at present judge, may be expected to take place in our permanent establishments, although they cannot operate to their full extent in the present year. The first article of reductions is under the head of the naval service, in which I am inclined to hope that the number of seamen may be reduced to 16,000, being 2,000 less than last year. This will produce a saving of 104,000*l*., and a further saving of about 10,000*l*. may probably be made in the estimate for the works to be carried on in the dock-yards.

In the actual establishment of the army, (after allowing for the proposed additions, which were explained when the army estimate was voted,) there may probably be a diminution of about 50,000*l*.; and 36,000*l*. will be saved in consequence of the expiration of the treaty for the Hessian subsidy, which, under the present circumstances, his Majesty has not thought it necessary to renew.

If, therefore, allowance is made on the one hand for the addition of 42,000*l*., and for the reductions in the army and navy, amounting together to about 200,000*l*., the estimate of the permanent annual expenditure will stand at 15,811,000*l*. ; the amount of the income of the last year, as I have before stated it, exceeds this sum by 919,000*l*.; the average of the amount of the two last years exceeds it by 804,000*l*.; the average of the three years by 607,000*l*.; and that of the four years on which I rest my calculations, by 401,000*l*. This then is the comparative view which I take of the permanent income, and the permanent expenditure ; and, according to the lowest of these calculations, there remains a disposeable annual surplus of about



400,000*l.*, after defraying the expense of all the establishments, and applying the annual million to the reduction of the public debt.

Before I submit to the committee the manner in which I would propose to distribute this surplus in future, I wish to advert to the supply, and ways and means for the present year, because in these there will be found some additional articles both of expenditure and of receipt. The supply for each year, as gentlemen are aware, includes all the establishments and the charges for the various branches of the public service, together with all incidental charges which are defrayed by annual grants. It is independent of the interest and charges of the national debt, of the million annually issued to the commissioners of the civil list, and of the other charges on the consolidated fund. The amount of all these articles is 11,391,000*l.*, and being permanently fixed, forms no part of the supply voted in each year.

For the navy we have voted this year 16,000 seamen, of which the charge is 832,000*l.*; for what is called the ordinary of the navy, 672,000*l.*; and for the extraordinary building and repairs (including the work in the dock-yards) 350,000*l.* We have also voted 131,000*l.* towards the reduction of the navy debt, which is sufficient for defraying the whole of the extra-expenses of the naval department in the last year, (including those of the armament) as far as they have not been already defrayed by the surplus arising from former grants. These sums together make 1,985,000*l.*

The establishment of the army for the present year is 1,474,000*l.*; the extraordinaries 277,000*l.*; besides 63,000*l.* advanced for the troops in India, which will ultimately be repaid by the company. The total voted for the army is 1,814,000*l.*

For the ordinary expenses of the ordnance there has been voted 221,000*l.*; for the extraordinaries nearly 157,000*l.*; and under the head of services performed in former years, but unprovided for, 44,000*l.*, making in the whole the sum of 422,000*l.*

The estimates for the colonies and plantations, amount to about 31,000*l.*

Various miscellaneous services, including the expense of African forts, the Mint, the roads in Scotland, the maintenance and transportation of convicts, the sum paid for printing journals, and some other articles, (particularly a compensation to the owners of African vessels for losses sustained in consequence of the late regulations, and likewise to the settlers removed in the year 1786 from the Mosquito shore,) amount in the whole to 114,000*l*.

There are two other articles which always form part of the annual statement of the supply, under the heads of deficiency of grants, and estimated deficiency of the land and malt, the nature of which is fully explained in the report of the committee of the last session, and for which allowance is made, though in a different shape, in the comparison of the permanent income and expenditure. The amount of the deficiency of grants is 436,000*l*., which includes in it the sum of 123,000*l*. repaid to the Bank, in consequence of the diminution of their floating balance, out of which 500,000*l*. had been advanced for the supply of last year; and the deficiency on the land and malt may be estimated at 350,000*l*.

To these articles I shall propose to add two others; the first is 100,000*l*. out of the supplies of the present year, to be applied towards the discharge of the exchequer bills issued on account of the Spanish armament; by which means we shall be enabled to repeal immediately the additional duty on malt, the produce of which for the present year was appropriated to the separate fund created for that purpose. The second is an additional sum to be issued in this particular year, beyond the annual million, for the reduction of the national debt; and, on the comparison of the supply with the ways and means for the year, I think it will appear, that this sum may be safely stated at 400,000*l*.

I have now enumerated all the articles of the supply, except the debentures to the American loyalists. These I omit, because they are nearly balanced by the profit on the lottery, which I do not mean to include in the statement of ways and means.



The first article of the estimated ways and means for the present year is the amount of the annual duties on land and malt, which may here be taken at 2,750,000*l.*, because exchequer bills will be issued on the credit of these duties to that amount; and the deficiency in the actual produce of the duties will, according to the usual practice, become a charge on the supply of future years, as the deficiency of the produce of former years is a charge on the supply of the present year. The next article consists of the sums which may be expected to be applied towards defraying the supply of the year out of the produce of the consolidated fund. This fund includes in it the whole amount of all the permanent taxes, and is applicable, in the first instance, to the payment at the end of each quarter of the permanent charges which I have before had occasion to enumerate. Any surplus which remains after payment of those charges is, from time to time, disposeable by parliament; and a sum equal to the expected amount of that surplus in the course of a year is always voted as an article of ways and means. In voting the ways and means, it has for some time been the practice to calculate from the 5th of April in the current year, to the 5th of April following; so that the grants for the supply of each particular year are not expected to be completed till the expiration of the first quarter in the subsequent year. In the present instance, however, there remained a sum of 155,000*l.* out of the actual surplus of the consolidated fund on the 5th of January, 1792, after making good the whole sum granted for the service of the year 1791, which had not been estimated to be completed till the quarter ending the 5th of April, 1792. The increase of the revenue having defrayed the whole charge, and furnished this actual surplus, as early as on the 5th of January last, and the 5th of April next, will yield a further surplus (after paying the interest of the debt, and other fixed charges) which, instead of being applied, as was estimated, to the service of the year 1791, will be applicable to the supply of the present year; and to this is to be added the growing produce of the consolidated fund for the succeeding twelve months, from the 5th of April, 1792, to the 5th of April, 1793.

The expected amount of the disposeable surplus on the 5th of April next, I state at 486,000*l.*; and in forming this calculation, I suppose the whole produce of the permanent taxes, during the current quarter, to be equal to the average formed from the corresponding quarters in each of the last four years, which amounts to 2,970,000*l.* To this is to be added the expected produce, during this quarter, of the temporary taxes appropriated to defray the expenses of the Spanish armament, because, up to the 5th of April, those taxes are directed to be carried to the consolidated fund, and the proportion of the expense of the Spanish armament, which was charged on the supply of 1792, has been already defrayed out of the produce of the revenue up to the 5th of January. Supposing these taxes to yield in this quarter a sum equal to their average produce in the three quarters since they have taken effect, their amount will be nearly 200,000*l.*, and this, added to the sum before stated, will make a total of 3,170,000*l.* From this is to be deducted the amount of the interest of debt, and other fixed charges on the consolidated fund for this quarter, which is about 2,684,000*l.*, leaving a remainder of 486,000*l.*

The further amount of the sum, which may be expected to arise from the surplus of the consolidated fund, between the 5th of April, 1792, and the 5th of April, 1793, I propose to estimate in like manner on the average of the four last years, making the necessary deduction on account of the taxes which I shall on this day propose to you to repeal.

The total amount of the revenue on that average, exclusive of land and malt, was 13,654,000*l.* The annual amount of the taxes proposed to be repealed is about 223,000*l.*: but as some arrears will be received from these taxes subsequent to their repeal, the sum to be deducted on this account in the present year, will not be to that amount, and may be estimated at about 163,000*l.* The total amount of the interest of debt and other fixed charges on the consolidated fund is (as I have already stated) 11,391,000*l.* There will, therefore, on these suppositions, remain a disposeable surplus of 2,100,000*l.*, to which



is to be added a sum of 200,000*l.* which there is good ground to suppose will be repaid to the public during this year from the balances of different accounts. These articles of ways and means added together amount to 5,691,000*l.* The articles of supply which I have enumerated, amount in the whole to 5,654,000*l.*, so that the ways and means exceed this supply by 37,000*l.*

I have already observed that, in the supply of the present year, there are some articles included, which exceed considerably the estimate of the permanent annual expenditure in the several branches of the public service; these consist principally of the additional sum of 400,000*l.* proposed to be issued to the commissioners; the sum of 100,000*l.* granted in lieu of the malt duty; the sum granted for the navy debt; that repaid to the Bank; the advance on account of the troops in India, and some excess in the army estimate; in the unprovided estimate of the ordnance; in the miscellaneous services and the deficiency of grants; and they all appear peculiar to the present year, and not likely to recur in future, except as far as an annual addition may hereafter be made to the sums issued for the reduction of the national debt.

In speaking, however, of the future expenditure, I am aware that contingencies may occasionally arise, which cannot at present be foreseen; but, as far as I have now the means of judging, I am not aware of any specific article in which there is likely to be an excess beyond the permanent estimate, except in the amount of the small sums which may be still necessary for completing the works for the protection of the dock-yards at home, and the expense of carrying into execution the plan of fortifications in the West Indies, which will be a subject of separate consideration. And with a view to these articles, or to other contingencies that may arise, I have the satisfaction of thinking, that they will probably be fully balanced by extraordinary resources, beyond the calculated amount of the present income. On the result, then, of these different statements, I think there is no reason to doubt, that we may, in the present year, apply an

additional sum of 400,000*l.* to the reduction of the national debt, and repeal the temporary duty on malt, at the same time allowing for the repeal of permanent taxes to the amount of about 200,000*l.* and for the application of nearly an equal annual sum in future, as a permanent addition to the fund for the discharge of the national debt.

The next point for consideration, is, the propriety of the general principle which I have assumed as the foundation of my plan; that of distributing the surplus of our revenue, and applying it in equal proportions to the diminution of taxes, and the reduction of debt. I have thought this the wisest plan which we can adopt, because, by combining present relief with permanent credit and security, it seems most likely to prevent any temptation hereafter to break in, with a rude hand, on the system for the gradual reduction of our debt. At the same time, this addition to the sinking fund, with the aid of a further sum from a distant source, which I shall mention presently, and, independent of any further increase of revenue, will enable us to make a rapid progress in this important work, and in a very short space of time to reach a point, which perhaps not long since was thought too distant for calculation.

I shall beg the indulgence of the committee while I state this rather more at large, because it is connected with other considerations which may lead to important measures for enforcing and strengthening our system for the discharge of the national debt. In attempting to form any calculations of the proportion of debt which may be discharged at any particular time, there are some contingencies which can only be stated hypothetically. They may, however, now be reduced to a narrower point than they have been in any former period. One material circumstance which has necessarily been considered as uncertain, is the price of the funds; but, as far as relates to the 3 per cents, this uncertainty seems to be in a great measure removed, with a view to the question under consideration; for, supposing the present state of prosperity to continue, no calculation can reasonably be formed on the idea of paying off any large portion of this stock



but at par. Under such circumstances, the principal question would be, whether the fund for the reduction of debt ought to be applied to the redemption or purchase of the 3 per cents, with a view to the reduction of interest on the 4 per cents, and on the 5 per cents? or, whether it should be applied to the redemption, first, of the 4 per cents, and afterwards (as soon as they become redeemable) of the 5 per cents? Without entering into minute disquisitions on this point, I will only state, that, according to the most accurate calculations which I have seen, the mode of applying the sinking fund to the purchase of the 3 per cents, and making use of the general improvement of credit in order to reduce the interest of the 4 per cents, and of the 5 per cents (when redeemable), and to carry the saving of interest as an addition to the sinking fund, will on the whole be quicker in its operation than the other mode, though not in any very considerable degree. I shall therefore suppose, in the first instance, that an addition of 400,000*l.* should be applied in the present year to the reduction of debt, and an annual addition, from the revenue for the next four years, of 200,000*l.* When the debentures to the American loyalists shall be discharged, (which will be in about four years subsequent to the present) the profits arising from the lottery, which, as I have already stated, are now set against this article of expenditure, will be left free, and will form an addition to the annual surplus. If the addition shall be distributed in the same manner as is now proposed, with respect to the present surplus, and if the tickets should continue to bear their present price, a further annual sum of 150,000*l.* (after allowing for the repeal of taxes to the same amount) will be applicable to the reduction of debt. Previous to this period, the 4 per cents may naturally be supposed to have been reduced in the first instance to  $3\frac{1}{2}$ , and ultimately to 3 per cent.; and the saving by this reduction of interest will amount at first to about 160,000*l.*, and when completed, to about 320,000*l.* By the operation of the present sinking fund, and of these additions to the redemption of the 3 per cents at par, it may be expected that 25 millions

of 3 per cents will have been paid off in the year 1800, after which the 5 per cents become redeemable ; and supposing the 3 per cents to continue at par, a further saving may then in a short time be made, by converting the 5 per cents to 3 per cents, which will amount in the whole to above 360,000*l*. and which I likewise suppose to be carried to the aid of the present sinking fund. The material question which on these suppositions it is natural to ask, is, When will the sinking fund arise to the amount of 4 millions per annum, which is the limit after which, according to the act of 1786, it is no longer to accumulate, but the interest of the capital which it thenceforth may redeem, is to be left open for the disposition of parliament ? It will amount to that sum, on the suppositions which I have stated, in 1808, a period of about fifteen years from the present time.

I am not, indeed, presumptuous enough to suppose, that when I name fifteen years, I am not naming a period in which events may arise, which human foresight cannot reach, and which may baffle all our conjectures. We must not count with certainty on a continuance of our present prosperity during such an interval ; but unquestionably there never was a time in the history of this country, when, from the situation of Europe, we might more reasonably expect fifteen years of peace, than we may at the present moment. But in looking forward to this very period, there arises one of the considerations to which I have referred, and which may lead us still to amend and enforce our system for the reduction of debt.

When the sum of four millions was originally fixed as the limit for the sinking fund, it was not in contemplation to issue more annually from the surplus revenue than one million ; consequently the fund would not rise to four millions till a proportion of debt was paid off, the interest of which, together with the annuities which might fall in in the interval, should amount to three millions.

But as, on the present supposition, additional sums beyond the original million are to be annually issued from the revenue, and



applied to the aid of the sinking fund, the consequence would be that, if that fund (with these additions carried to it) were still to be limited to four millions, it would reach that amount, and cease to accumulate, before as great a portion of the debt is reduced as was originally in contemplation. This effect would be more considerable, if, instead of an annual addition of 350,000*l.* in the whole, which is the amount on which I have calculated, the further increase of the revenue should admit (as it probably may) of the application of a larger surplus; and in either of these cases, although the ultimate amount of the sinking fund would be equal to what was originally intended, and it would reach that point sooner, yet it would bear a less proportion to the capital of the debt which it would afterwards have to discharge, than it would have done according to the original plan. In order to avoid this consequence, which would, as far as it went, be a relaxation in our system, I should propose, that whatever may be the additional annual sums applied to the reduction of debt, the fund should not cease to accumulate till the interest of the capital discharged, and the amount of expired annuities should, together with the annual million only, and exclusive of any additional sums, amount to four millions.

But I confess, that, in the present situation of the country, I am inclined to think that we ought not to stop here. What we did in 1786 was, perhaps, as much as could be attempted under the circumstances of that time. At present we ought not to confine our views to the operation of the sinking fund, compared with the debt now existing. If our system stops there, the country will remain exposed to the possibility of being again involved in those embarrassments, which we have, in our own time, severely experienced, and which, apparently, brought us almost to the verge of bankruptcy and ruin. We ought therefore to look forward, in order to provide a permanent remedy against the danger of fresh accumulation of debt in consequence of future contingencies. And this, as I shall explain more particularly on some future occasion, may, I am persuaded, be effected without the danger of any inconvenience

or embarrassment, which can counterbalance the magnitude of the object.

The measure which I have in view, is to enact, that whenever any loan should take place in future, unless raised by annuities which would terminate in a moderate number of years, there should of course be issued out of the consolidated fund, to the commissioners for the reduction of the national debt, an additional annual sum, sufficient to discharge the capital of such loan, in the same period as the sinking fund, after reaching its largest amount, will discharge what would then remain of the present debt. The committee will recollect, that the idea which I am now stating is not new to my mind, though I have never before proposed it as a permanent regulation. Two years from this time, when I had the mortification of thinking that the country might be engaged in an expensive war in consequence of our discussions with the court of Spain, I gave notice that I should propose to follow, very nearly, this system, with respect to any loans which might then be necessary. I will not, however, enlarge further on this subject at present. I have already stated enough to shew that the system which I wish to propose is calculated to provide effectually for the discharge of the public debt, at the same time that it diminishes the burthens of the people; and that, in consulting our own immediate ease, we cannot be accused of sacrificing the permanent interests of posterity.

Supposing therefore, that the distribution which I have suggested should appear to the house fit to be adopted, and that taxes to the amount of 200,000*l.* per annum should now be taken off, I will beg leave next, for the purpose of bringing the whole subject under consideration, to state the particular taxes, which, if nothing preferable is suggested by others, I should propose to repeal. And, in making this selection, there are two objects which I wish principally to keep in view. The first, to which it is very material to attend, is, that the actual relief felt by the public should be proportioned to the amount of revenue which is relinquished. Under these descriptions those taxes



seem most clearly to be included, which are raised by the mode of assessment, because as they are paid directly out of the pocket of the individual, and do not pass through circuitous channels like taxes upon the articles of consumption, where the tax is often blended with the price of the commodity, there can be little doubt that the relief intended to be given will in these instances be effectual to its fullest extent. The other object which I naturally have in view, is, that the relief intended should apply peculiarly to that class, to whom, on every account, it ought first to be extended,—I mean the most necessitous, and the most industrious part of the community.

Combining these objects, the first article to which I have directed my attention is, the temporary duty on malt, imposed in the last session.

The three next taxes which I shall state, are permanent taxes, which fall under the description of being raised by assessment, and which have also the further advantage of extending relief widely, and where we must most wish it to be extended.—The first is the tax upon female servants, which is certainly paid by the poorer class of house-keepers, and which is charged upon about 90,000 different families—the amount is 31,000*l*. The next is, the tax upon carts and waggons, which applies to the whole of the yeomanry of the country, to all those who are occupied in agriculture, who pay in this shape a sum not indeed very considerable, but which perhaps is felt, from the inconvenience and trouble which it occasions, more than from the burthen itself. About 90,000 persons are affected by this tax also, of which the amount is nearly 30,000*l*. The third tax applies to the poorest of all the orders of the community,—I mean the tax on houses having less than seven windows, which are exempted from the payment of any other tax, but that of three shillings. The amount of the sum is small, but to those who are the objects of it, its repeal will be a substantial relief and comfort, and it will at least be a pledge and earnest of the attention of parliament to their interests. It extends, I believe, to between

three and four hundred thousand houses, and its amount is about 56,000*l*.

The next and last which I have to mention is the last additional tax of a halfpenny per pound on the article of candles, which presses more, perhaps, than any other tax on consumption, upon the class of whom I have been speaking; and if this tax is repealed from a given day, and the duty upon the stock in hand is allowed to all the manufacturers and dealers in that article, I believe there can be no question that the reduction of the price will be in proportion to the duty repealed: its amount is about 106,000*l*.; and the total of all these taxes is 223,000*l*.

I have now explained the several measures which I shall this day propose to the committee; but I should think that I left the subject imperfectly discussed, if I did not proceed to lay before you such considerations as may enable you to judge how far there is a reasonable prospect that the fortunate situation which I have described may be permanent. And in order to do this, I wish again to call your attention to the progressive increase of the revenue, and to state within what periods it has taken place.

If we compare the revenue of last year with that of the year 1786, we shall find an excess in the last year of 2,300,000*l*. If we go back to the year 1783, which is the first year of peace, we shall find the increase since that period, including the produce of the additional permanent taxes which have been imposed in the interval, to be little less than four millions. We shall, I believe, also find, that, with the exception of the year 1786, in which the suspense of trade, occasioned by the negotiation for the commercial treaty with France, naturally affected the revenue, there is hardly any one year in which the increase has not been continual.

In examining the branches of revenue, we shall find that rather more than one million has arisen from the imposition of new taxes; about one million more in those articles in which



particular and separate regulations have been made for the prevention of fraud; and that the remaining sum of two millions appears to be diffused over the articles of general consumption, and must therefore be attributed to the best of all causes—a general increase in the wealth and prosperity of the country.

If we look more minutely into the particular articles on which the revenue arises, we shall still find no ground to imagine, that any considerable part of it is temporary or accidental, but shall have additional reason to ascribe it to the cause which I have just now stated. In the revenue of the customs there is no material article where an increase might be supposed to proceed from the accident of seasons, but that of sugar, and it appears that, upon the average of the four years on which I have formed my calculation, that article has not produced beyond its usual amount. Many of the articles under the head of customs, in which the augmentation is most apparent, consist of raw materials, the increasing importation of which is, at once, a symptom and a cause of the increasing wealth of the country. This observation will apply, in some degree, even to the raw material of a manufacture which has generally been supposed to be on the decline,—I mean that of silk. In the article of wool, the increase has been gradual and considerable. The quantity of bar-iron imported from abroad is also increased, though we all know how considerably our own iron works have been extended during the period to which I have referred. There is hardly any considerable article in which there is any decrease, except that of hemp in the last year, which is probably accidental, and that of linen, the importation of which from abroad may be diminished by accidental causes, or perhaps in consequence of the rapid increase of the manufacture of that article at home.

On looking at the articles composing the revenues of excise, the same observations will arise in a manner still more striking. There is, indeed, one branch of that revenue, the increase of which may in part be attributed to the accident of seasons,—I mean that which arises from the different articles of which malt

is an ingredient; but I am inclined to believe that this increase cannot be wholly ascribed to that cause, because, during all the four years, the amount of the duty upon beer and ale has uniformly been progressive. In the great articles of consumption which I will shortly enumerate, without dwelling on particulars—in home-made and foreign spirits, wine, soap, tobacco, the increase has been considerable and uniform. In the articles of bricks and tiles, starch, paper, and printed goods, there has also on the whole been a considerable increase, although there has been some fluctuation in different years. Almost every branch of revenue would furnish instances of a similar nature. The revenue raised by stamps has increased in the produce of the old duties, while at the same time new duties have been added to a large amount, and the augmentation is on this head, on the whole, near 400,000*l.*, a sum which is raised in such a manner as to be attended with little inconvenience to those who pay it. The amount of the duty upon salt during the same period has been progressive. The revenue of the post-office is another article, comparatively small, but which furnishes a strong indication of the internal state of the country. No additional duty has been imposed since the year 1784. In 1785, it yielded 238,000*l.*, and in the last year 338,000*l.* I mention all these circumstances as tending to throw additional light on the subject, and serving to illustrate and confirm the general conclusion to which they all uniformly tend.

If from this examination of the different branches of the revenue, we proceed to <sup>be</sup> more direct enquiry into the sources of our prosperity, we shall trace them in a corresponding increase of manufacture and commerce.

The accounts formed from the documents of the custom-house are not indeed to be relied upon as shewing accurately the value of our imports and exports in any one year, but they furnish some standard of comparison between different periods, and in that view I will state them to the committee.

In the year 1782, the last year of the war, the imports, according to the valuation at the custom-house, amounted to



9,714,000*l.*; they have gradually increased in each successive year, and amounted, in the year 1790, to 19,130,000*l.*

The export of British manufactures forms a still more important and decisive criterion of commercial prosperity. The amount in 1782 was stated at 9,919,000*l.*; in the following year, it was 10,409,000*l.*; in the year 1790, it had risen to 14,921,000*l.*; and in the last year (for which the account is just completed as far as relates to British manufactures), it was 16,420,000*l.* If we include in the account the foreign articles re-exported, the total of the export in 1782 was 12,239,000*l.*; after the peace it rose, in 1783, to 14,741,000*l.*; and in the year 1790, it was 20,120,000*l.* These documents, as far as they go, (and they are necessarily imperfect) serve only to give a view of the foreign trade of the country. It is more than probable, that our internal trade, which contributes still more to our wealth, has been increasing in at least an equal proportion. I have not the means of stating with accuracy a comparative view of our manufactures during the same period; but their rapid progress has been the subject of general observation, and the local knowledge of gentlemen from different parts of the country, before whom I am speaking, must render any detail on this point unnecessary.

Having gone thus far, having stated the increase of revenue, and shewn that it has been accompanied by a proportionate increase of the national wealth, commerce, and manufactures, I feel that it is natural to ask, what have been the peculiar circumstances to which these effects are to be ascribed?

The first and most obvious answer which every man's mind will suggest to this question, is, that it arises from the natural industry and energy of the country: but what is it which has enabled that industry and energy to act with such peculiar vigour, and so far beyond the example of former periods?—The improvement which has been made in the mode of carrying on almost every branch of manufacture, and the degree to which labour has been abridged, by the invention and application of machinery, have undoubtedly had a considerable share in pro-

ducing such important effects. We have besides seen, during these periods, more than at any former time, the effect of one circumstance which has principally tended to raise this country to its mercantile pre-eminence—I mean that peculiar degree of credit which, by a twofold operation, at once gives additional facility and extent to the transactions of our merchants at home, and enables them to obtain a proportional superiority in markets abroad. This advantage has been most conspicuous during the latter part of the period to which I have referred; and it is constantly increasing, in proportion to the prosperity which it contributes to create.

In addition to all this, the exploring and enterprising spirit of our merchants has been seen in the extension of our navigation and our fisheries, and the acquisition of new markets in different parts of the world; and undoubtedly those efforts have been not a little assisted by the additional intercourse with France, in consequence of the commercial treaty; an intercourse which, though probably checked and abated by the distractions now prevailing in that kingdom, has furnished a great additional incitement to industry and exertion.

But there is still another cause, even more satisfactory than these, because it is of a still more extensive and permanent nature; that constant accumulation of capital, that continual tendency to increase, the operation of which is universally seen in a greater or less proportion, whenever it is not obstructed by some public calamity, or by some mistaken and mischievous policy, but which must be conspicuous and rapid indeed in any country which has once arrived at an advanced state of commercial prosperity. Simple and obvious as this principle is, and felt and observed as it must have been in a greater or less degree, even from the earliest periods, I doubt whether it has ever been fully developed and sufficiently explained, but in the writings of an author of our own times, now unfortunately no more, (I mean the author of a celebrated treatise on the Wealth of Nations) whose extensive knowledge of detail, and depth of philosophical research, will, I believe, furnish the best solution to

every question connected with the history of commerce, or with the systems of political economy. This accumulation of capital arises from the continual application, of a part at least, of the profit obtained in each year, to increase the total amount of capital to be employed in a similar manner, and with continued profit in the year following. The great mass of the property of the nation is thus constantly increasing at compound interest; the progress of which, in any considerable period, is what at first view would appear incredible. Great as have been the effects of this cause already, they must be greater in future; for its powers are augmented in proportion as they are exerted. It acts with a velocity continually accelerated, with a force continually increased.

*Mobilitate viget, viresque acquirit eundo.* -

It may indeed, as we have ourselves experienced, be checked or retarded by particular circumstances—it may for a time be interrupted, or even overpowered; but, where there is a fund of productive labour and active industry, it can never be totally extinguished. In the season of the severest calamity and distress, its operations will still counteract and diminish their effects;—in the first returning interval of prosperity, it will be active to repair them. If we look to a period like the present, of continued tranquillity, the difficulty will be to imagine limits to its operation. None can be found, while there exists at home any one object of skill or industry short of its utmost possible perfection;—one spot of ground in the country capable of higher cultivation and improvement; or while there remains abroad any new market that can be explored, or any existing market that can be extended. From the intercourse of commerce, it will in some measure participate in the growth of other nations, in all the possible varieties of their situations. The rude wants of countries emerging from barbarism, and the artificial and increasing demands of luxury and refinement, will equally open new sources of treasure, and new fields of exertion, in every state of society, and in the remotest quarters of the



globe. It is this principle which, I believe, according to the uniform result of history and experience, maintains on the whole, in spite of the vicissitudes of fortune, and the disasters of empires, a continued course of successive improvement in the general order of the world.

Such are the circumstances which appear to me to have contributed most immediately to our present prosperity. But these again are connected with others yet more important.

They are obviously and necessarily connected with the duration of peace, the continuance of which, on a secure and permanent footing, must ever be the first object of the foreign policy of this country. They are connected still more with its internal tranquillity and with the natural effects of a free but well regulated government.

What is it which has produced, in the last hundred years, so rapid an advance, beyond what can be traced in any other period of our history? What but that, during that time, under the mild and just government of the illustrious Princes of the family now on the throne, a general calm has prevailed through the country, beyond what was ever before experienced; and we have also enjoyed, in greater purity and perfection, the benefit of those original principles of our constitution, which were ascertained and established by the memorable events that closed the century preceding? This is the great and governing cause, the operation of which has given scope to all the other circumstances which I have enumerated.

It is this union of liberty with law, which, by raising a barrier equally firm against the encroachments of power, and the violence of popular commotion, affords to property its just security, produces the exertion of genius and labour, the extent and solidity of credit, the circulation and increase of capital; which forms and upholds the national character, and sets in motion all the springs which actuate the great mass of the community through all its various descriptions.

The laborious industry of those useful and extensive classes (who will, I trust, be in a peculiar degree this day the object of

the consideration of the house) the peasantry and yeomanry of the country; the skill and ingenuity of the artificer; the experiments and improvements of the wealthy proprietor of land; the bold speculations and successful adventures of the opulent merchant and enterprising manufacturer; these are all to be traced to the same source, and all derive from hence both their encouragement and their reward. On this point therefore let us principally fix our attention, let us preserve this first and most essential object, and every other is in our power! Let us remember, that the love of the constitution, though it acts as a sort of natural instinct in the hearts of Englishmen, is strengthened by reason and reflection, and every day confirmed by experience; that it is a constitution which we do not merely admire from traditional reverence, which we do not flatter from prejudice or habit, but which we cherish and value, because we know that it practically secures the tranquillity and welfare both of individuals and of the public, and provides, beyond any other frame of government which has ever existed, for the real and useful ends which form at once the only true foundation and only rational object of all political societies.

I have now nearly closed all the considerations which I think it necessary to offer to the committee. I have endeavoured to give a distinct view of the surplus arising on the comparison of the permanent income (computed on the average which I have stated) with what may be expected to be the permanent expenditure in time of peace, and I have also stated the comparison of the supply, and of the ways and means of this particular year. I have pointed out the leading and principal articles of revenue in which the augmentation has taken place, and the corresponding increase in the trade and manufactures of the country; and finally, I have attempted to trace these effects to their causes, and to explain the principles which appear to account for the striking and favourable change in our general situation. From the result of the whole, I trust I am entitled to conclude, that the scene which we are now contem-

plating is not the transient effect of accident, not the short-lived prosperity of a day, but the genuine and natural result of regular and permanent causes. The season of our severe trial is at an end, and we are at length relieved, not only from the dejection and gloom which, a few years since, hung over the country, but from the doubt and uncertainty which, even for a considerable time after our prospect had begun to brighten, still mingled with the hopes and expectations of the public. We may yet indeed be subject to those fluctuations which often happen in the affairs of a great nation, and which it is impossible to calculate or foresee; but as far as there can be any reliance on human speculations, we have the best ground, from the experience of the past, to look with satisfaction to the present, and with confidence to the future. "*Nunc demum redit animus, cum non spem modò ac votum securitas publica, sed ipsius voti fiduciam et robur assumpserit.*" This is a state not of hope only, but of attainment; not barely the encouraging prospect of future advantage, but the solid and immediate benefit of present and actual possession.

On this situation and this prospect, fortunate beyond our most sanguine expectations, let me congratulate you, and the house, and my country! And before I conclude, let me express my earnest wish, my anxious and fervent prayer, that now in this period of our success, for the sake of the present age and of posterity, there may be no intermission in that vigilant attention of parliament to every object connected with the revenue, the resources, and the credit of the state, which has carried us through all our difficulties, and led to this rapid and wonderful improvement;—that, still keeping pace with the exertions of the legislature, the genius and spirit, the loyalty and public virtue of a great and free people, may long deserve, and (under the favour of Providence) may ensure the continuance of this unexampled prosperity; and that Great Britain may thus remain for ages in the possession of these distinguished advantages, under the protection and safeguard of that consti-



tution, to which (as we have been truly told from the Throne) they are principally to be ascribed, and which is indeed the great source, and the best security of all that can be dear, and valuable to a nation !

At the conclusion of the debate, the committee, without a division, came to the following resolutions :

RESOLVED,

That, from and after the 5th day of April 1792, the duties charged by an act made in the 31st year of the reign of his present Majesty, intituled, " An act for granting to his Majesty additional duties upon malt," do cease and determine.

RESOLVED,

That, from and after the 5th day of April 1792, the duties on female servants, charged by an act, made in the 25th year of the reign of his present Majesty, intituled " An act to repeal duties on male servants, and for granting new duties on male and female servants," do cease, and determine.

RESOLVED,

That, from and after the 5th day of April 1792, the duties charged by an act, made in the 23d year of his present Majesty, intituled, " An act for granting to his Majesty several rates and duties upon waggons, wains, carts, and other such carriages, not charged with any duty under the management of the commissioners of excise," do cease and determine.

RESOLVED,

That, from and after the 5th day of April 1792, the duties now payable on certain inhabited houses, containing less than seven windows or lights, charged by an act of the 6th year of the reign of his present Majesty, do cease and determine.

RESOLVED,

That, from and after the 5th day of April 1792, one half-penny in the pound of the duty upon all candles (except wax and spermaceti candles) do cease and determine.

ORDERED,

That a bill, or bills, be brought in upon the said resolutions ; and that the Earl of Mornington, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Edward James Eliot, the Lord Bayham, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Attorney-General, Mr. Solicitor-General, Mr. Rose, and Mr. Charles Long, do prepare, and bring in, the same.

And in the committee of the supply on the same day, it was resolved to grant to his Majesty the sum of 400,000*l.* to be issued and paid to the governor and company of the Bank of England, to be by them placed to the account of the commissioners for the reduction of the national debt.

*April 2, 1792.*

THE house, after receiving a number of petitions \* praying for the Abolition of the Slave-trade, resolved itself into a committee of the whole house, to take the circumstances of the trade into consideration :—when Mr. Wilberforce moved the following resolution : “ That it is the opinion of this committee, that the trade carried on by British subjects, for the purpose of obtaining slaves on the coast of Africa, ought to be abolished.”

MR. PITT, at a late hour, rose, and addressed the committee as follows :

At this hour of the morning I am afraid, Sir, I am too much exhausted to enter so fully into the subject before the committee as I could wish ; but if my bodily strength is in any degree equal to the task, I feel so strongly the magnitude of this question, that I am extremely earnest to deliver my sentiments, which I rise to do with the more satisfaction, because I now look forward to the issue of this business with considerable hopes of success.

The debate has this day taken a turn, which, though it has produced a variety of new suggestions, has, upon the whole, contracted this question into a much narrower point than it was ever brought into before.

I cannot say that I quite agree with the right honourable gentleman over the way ; † I am far from deploring all that has been said by my two honourable friends‡. I rather rejoice that they have now brought this subject to a fair issue—that something, at least, is already gained, and that the question has taken altogether a new course this night. It is true, a difference of opinion has been stated, and has been urged with all the force of argument that could be given to it. But give me leave to say, that this difference has been urged upon principles very far removed from those which were maintained by the opponents of my honourable friend when he

\* The whole number of petitions presented to this day, was five hundred and eight.

† Mr. Fox.

‡ Mr. Dundas, and the Speaker.

first brought forward his motion. There are very few of those who have spoken this night, who have not thought it their duty to declare their full and entire concurrence with my honourable friend in promoting the abolition of the slave-trade, as their ultimate object. However we may differ as to the time and manner of it, we are agreed in the abolition itself; and my honourable friends have expressed their agreement in this sentiment with that sensibility upon the subject, which humanity does most undoubtedly require. I do not, however, think they yet perceive what are the necessary consequences of their own concession, or follow up their own principles to their just conclusion.

The point now in dispute between us, is, a difference merely as to the period of time, at which the abolition of the slave-trade ought to take place. I therefore congratulate this house, the country, and the world, that this great point is gained; that we may now consider this trade as having received its condemnation; that its sentence is sealed; that this curse of mankind is seen by the house in its true light; and that the greatest stigma on our national character which ever yet existed, is about to be removed! And, Sir, (which is still more important,) that mankind, I trust, in general, are now likely to be delivered from the greatest practical evil that ever has afflicted the human race—from the severest and most extensive calamity recorded in the history of the world!

In proceeding to give my reasons for concurring with my honourable friend in his motion, I shall necessarily advert to those topics which my honourable friends near me have touched upon; and which they stated to be their motives for preferring a gradual, and, in some degree, a distant abolition of the slave-trade, to the more immediate and direct measure now proposed to you. Beginning as I do, with declaring that in this respect I differ completely from my right honourable friends near me, I do not, however, mean to say, that I differ as to one observation which has been pressed rather strongly by them. If they can shew that their proposition of a gradual abolition, is more



likely than ours to secure the object which we have in view—that by proceeding gradually we shall arrive more speedily at our end, and attain it with more certainty, than by a direct vote immediately to abolish:—If they can shew to the satisfaction both of myself and the committee, that our proposition has more the appearance of a speedy abolition, than the reality of it; undoubtedly they will in this case make a convert of me, and my honourable friend who moved the question; they will make a convert of every man among us, who looks to this, which I trust we all do, as a question not to be determined by theoretical principles or enthusiastic feelings, but considers the practicability of the measure—aiming simply to effect his object in the shortest time, and in the surest possible manner.

If, however, I shall be able to shew that our measure proceeds more directly to its object, and secures it with more certainty, and within a less distant period; and that the slave-trade will on our plan be abolished sooner than on his; may I not then hope, that my right honourable friends will be as ready to adopt our proposition, as we should in the other case be willing to accede to theirs?

One of my right honourable friends has stated, that an act passed here for the abolition of the slave-trade, would not secure its abolition. Now, Sir, I should be glad to know, why an act of the British legislature, enforced by all those sanctions which we have undoubtedly the power and the right to apply, is not to be effectual; at least as to every material purpose? Will not the executive power have the same appointment of the officers and the courts of judicature, by which all the causes relating to this subject must be tried, that it has in other cases? Will there not be the same system of law by which we now maintain a monopoly of commerce? If the same law, Sir, be applied to the prohibition of the slave-trade, which is applied in the case of other contraband commerce, with all the same means of the country to back it, I am at a loss to know why the actual and total abolition is not as likely to be effected in this way, as by any plan or project of my honourable friends, for bringing about

a gradual termination of it. But my observation is extremely fortified by what fell from my honourable friend \* who spoke last : he has told you, Sir, that if you will have patience with it for a few years, the slave-trade must drop of itself, from the increasing dearness of the commodity imported, and the increasing progress, on the other hand, of internal population. Is it true, then, that the importations are so expensive and disadvantageous already, that the internal population is even now becoming a cheaper resource ? I ask then, if you leave to the importer no means of importation but by smuggling, and if, besides all the present disadvantages, you load him with all the charges and hazards of the smuggler, by taking care that the laws against smuggling are in this case watchfully and rigorously enforced, is there any danger of any considerable supply of fresh slaves being poured into the islands through this channel ? And is there any real ground of fear, because a few slaves may have been smuggled in or out of the islands, that a bill will be useless and ineffectual on any such ground ? The question under these circumstances will not bear a dispute.

Perhaps, however, my honourable friends may take up another ground, and say, " It is true your measure would shut out further importations more immediately ; but we do not mean to shut them out immediately. We think it right, on grounds of general expediency, that they should not be immediately shut out." Let us therefore now come to this question of the expediency of making the abolition distant and gradual, rather than immediate.

The argument of expediency, in my opinion, like every other argument in this disquisition, will not justify the continuance of the slave-trade for one unnecessary hour. Supposing it to be in our power (which I have shewn it is) to enforce the prohibition from this present time, the expediency of doing it is to me so clear, that if I went on this principle alone, I should not feel a moment's hesitation. What is the argument of expediency stated on the other side ? It is doubted whether the deaths and births

\* Mr. Jenkinson.

in the islands are as yet so nearly equal as to ensure the keeping up of a sufficient stock of labourers : in answer to this, I took the liberty of mentioning, in a former year, what appeared to me to be the state of population at that time. My observations were taken from documents which we have reason to judge authentic, and which carried on the face of them the conclusions I then stated : they were the clear, simple, and obvious result of a careful examination which I made into this subject, and any gentleman who will take the same pains may arrive at the same degree of satisfaction.

These calculations, however, applied to a period of time that is now four or five years past. The births were then, in the general view of them, nearly equal to the deaths ; and, as the state of population was shewn, by a considerable retrospect, to be regularly increasing, an excess of births must before this time have taken place.

Another observation has been made as to the disproportion of the sexes : this, however, is a disparity which existed in any material degree only in former years ; it is a disparity of which the slave-trade has been itself the cause ; which will gradually diminish as the slave-trade diminishes, and must entirely cease, if the trade shall be abolished ; but which, nevertheless, is made the very plea for its continuance. I believe this disproportion of the sexes, taking the whole number in the islands, Creole as well as imported Africans, the latter of whom occasion all the disproportion, is not now by any means considerable.

But, Sir, I also shewed, that the great mortality which turned the balance so as to make the deaths appear more numerous than the births, arose too from the imported Africans, who die in extraordinary numbers in the seasoning. If, therefore, the importation of negroes should cease, every one of the causes of mortality, which I have now stated, would cease also. Nor can I conceive any reason why the present number of labourers should not maintain itself in the West Indies, except it be from some artificial cause, some fault in the islands ; such as the impolicy of their governors, or the cruelty of the managers and officers, whom they employ,



I will not reiterate all that I said at that time, or go through island by island. It is true, there is a difference in the ceded islands; and I state them possibly to be, in some respects, an excepted case. But, if we are to enter into the subject of the mortality in clearing new lands, this, Sir, is undoubtedly another question; the mortality here is tenfold; and this is to be considered, not as the carrying on of a trade, but as the setting on foot of a slave-trade for the purpose of peopling the colony; a measure which I think will not now be maintained. I therefore desire gentlemen to tell me fairly, whether the period they look to is not now arrived? Whether, at this hour, the West Indies may not be declared to have actually attained a state in which they can maintain their population? and upon the answer I must necessarily receive, I think I could safely rest the whole of the question.

One honourable gentleman has rather ingeniously observed that one or other of these two assertions of ours, must necessarily be false: that either the population must be decreasing, which we deny; or, if the population is increasing, that the slaves must be perfectly well treated, (this being the cause of such population) which we deny also. That the population is rather increasing than otherwise, and also that the general treatment is by no means so good as it ought to be, are both points which have been separately proved by different evidences; nor are these two points so entirely incompatible. The ill treatment must be very great indeed, in order to diminish materially the population of any race of people. That it is not so extremely great as to do this, I will admit. I will even admit, if you please, that this charge may possibly have been sometimes exaggerated; and I certainly think, that it applies less and less as we come nearer to the present times.

But, let us see how this contradiction of ours, as it is thought, really stands, and how the explanation of it will completely settle our minds, on the point in question. Do the slaves diminish in numbers? It can be nothing but ill treatment that causes the di-

minution. This ill treatment the abolition must and will restrain. In this case, therefore, we ought to vote for the abolition. On the other hand, Do you choose to say that the slaves clearly increase in numbers? Then you want no importations, and, in this case also, you may safely vote for the abolition. Or, if you choose to say, as the third and only other case which can be put, and which perhaps is the nearest to the truth, that the population is nearly stationary, and the treatment neither so bad nor so good as it might be; then surely, Sir, it will not be denied, that this of all others, is, on each of the two grounds, the proper period for stopping further supplies: for your population, which you own is already stationary, will thus be made undoubtedly to increase from the births, and the good treatment of your present slaves, which I am now supposing is but very moderate, will be necessarily improved also by the same measure of abolition. I say, therefore, that these propositions, contradictory as they may be represented, are in truth not at all inconsistent, but even come in aid of each other, and lead to a conclusion that is decisive. And let it be always remembered, that in this branch of my argument, I have only in view the well-being of the West Indies, and do not now ground any thing on the African part of the question.

But, Sir, I may carry these observations respecting the islands much further. It is within the power of the colonists, (and is it not then their indispensable duty?) to apply themselves to the correction of those various abuses, by which population is restrained. The most important consequences may be expected to attend colonial regulations for this purpose. With the improvement of internal population, the condition of every negro will improve also; his liberty will advance, or at least he will be approaching to a state of liberty. Nor can you increase the happiness, or extend the freedom of the negro, without adding in an equal degree to the safety of the islands, and of all their inhabitants. Thus, Sir, in the place of *slaves*, who naturally have an interest directly opposite to that of their masters, and are therefore viewed by them with an eye of constant suspicion, you will

create a body of valuable *citizens and subjects*, forming a part of the same community, having a common interest with their superiors, in the security and prosperity of the whole.

And, here let me add, that in proportion as you increase the happiness of these unfortunate beings, you will undoubtedly increase in effect the quantity of their labour also. Gentlemen talk of the diminution of the labour of the islands! I will venture to assert, that, even if in consequence of the abolition there were to be some decrease in the number of hands, the quantity of work done, supposing the condition of the slaves to improve, would by no means diminish in the same proportion; perhaps would be far from diminishing at all. For if you restore to this degraded race the true feelings of men; if you take them out from among the order of brutes, and place them on a level with the rest of the human species; they will then work with that energy which is natural to men, and their labour will be productive, in a thousand ways, above what it has yet been; as the labour of a man is always more productive than that of a mere brute.

It generally happens, that in every bad cause some information arises out of the evidence of its defenders themselves, which serves to expose in one part or other the weakness of their defence. It is the characteristic of such a cause, that if it be at all gone into, even by its own supporters, it is liable to be ruined by the contradictions in which those who maintain it are forever involved.

The committee of the privy council of Great Britain sent over certain queries to the West-India islands, with a view of elucidating the present subject; and they particularly enquired, whether the negroes had any days or hours allotted to them, in which they might work for themselves. The assemblies in their answers, with an air of great satisfaction state the labour of the slaves to be moderate, and the West-India system to be well calculated to promote the domestic happiness of the slaves: They add, "that proprietors are not compelled by law to allow their slaves any part of the six working days of the week for them-



selves, but that it is the general practice to allow them one afternoon in every week out of crop time, which, with such hours as they choose to work on Sundays, is time amply sufficient for their own purposes :” Now, therefore, will the negroes, or, I may rather say, do the negroes work for their own emolument? I beg the committee’s attention to this point: The assembly of Grenada proceeds to state—I have their own words for it—“That though the negroes are allowed the afternoons of only one day in every week, they will do as much work in that afternoon, when employed for their own benefit, as in the whole day when employed in their masters’ service.”

Now, Sir, I will desire you to burn all my calculations; to disbelieve, if you please, every word I have said on the present state of population; nay, I will admit, for the sake of argument, that the numbers are decreasing, and the productive labour at present insufficient for the cultivation of those countries: And I will then ask, whether the increase in the quantity of labour which is reasonably to be expected from the improved condition of the slaves, is not, by the admission of the islands themselves, by their admission not merely of an argument but a fact, far more than sufficient to counterbalance any decrease which can be rationally apprehended from a defective state of their population? Why, Sir, a negro, if he works for himself, and not for a master, will do double work! This is their own account. If you will believe the planters, if you will believe the legislature of the islands, the productive labour of the colonies would, in case the negroes worked as free labourers instead of slaves, be literally doubled. Half the present labourers, on this supposition, would suffice, for the whole cultivation of our islands on the present scale. I therefore confidently ask the house, whether, in considering the whole of this question, we may not fairly look forward to an improvement in the condition of these unhappy and degraded beings, not only as an event desirable on the ground of humanity and political prudence, but also as a means of increasing, very considerably indeed, (even without any increasing population,) the productive industry of the islands?

When gentlemen are so nicely balancing the past and future means of cultivating the plantations, let me request them to put this argument into the scale; and the more they consider it, the more will they be satisfied, that both the solidity of the principle which I have stated, and the fact which I have just quoted in the very words of the colonial legislature, will bear me out in every inference I have drawn. I think they will perceive also, that it is the undeniable duty of this house, on the grounds of true policy, immediately to sanction and carry into effect that system which ensures these important advantages; in addition to all those other inestimable blessings which follow in their train.

If, therefore, the argument of expediency, as applying to the West-India islands, is the test by which this question is to be tried, I trust I have now established this proposition, namely, that whatever tends most speedily and effectually to meliorate the condition of the slaves, is, undoubtedly on the ground of expediency, leaving justice out of the question, the main object to be pursued.

That the immediate abolition of the slave-trade will most eminently have this effect, and that it is the only measure from which this effect can in any considerable degree be expected, are points to which I shall presently come; but before I enter upon them, let me notice one or two further circumstances.

We are told (and by respectable and well-informed persons) that the purchase of new negroes has been injurious instead of profitable to the planters themselves; so large a proportion of these unhappy wretches being found to perish in the seasoning. Writers well versed in this subject have even advised that, in order to remove the temptation which the slave-trade offers to expend large sums in this injudicious way, the door of importation should be shut.—This very plan which we now propose, the mischief of which is represented to be so great as to outweigh so many other momentous considerations, has actually been recommended by some of the best authorities, as a plan highly requisite to be adopted on the very principle of advantage to the

islands; nay, not merely on that principle of general and political advantage on which I have already touched, but for the advantage of the very individuals who would otherwise be most forward in purchasing slaves. On the part of the West-Indians it is urged, "The planters are in debt: They are already distressed; if you stop the slave-trade, they will be ruined." Mr. Long, the celebrated historian of Jamaica, recommends the stopping of importations, as a receipt for enabling the plantations which are embarrassed to get out of debt. I will quote his words. Speaking of the usurious terms on which money is often borrowed for the purchase of fresh slaves, he advises "the laying of a duty equal to a prohibition on all negroes imported for the space of four or five years, except for re-exportation." "Such a law," he proceeds to say, "would be attended with the following good consequences. It would put an immediate stop to these extortions; it would enable the planter to retrieve his affairs by preventing him from running in debt, either by renting or purchasing negroes; it would render such recruits less necessary, by the redoubled care he would be obliged to take of his present stock, the preservation of their lives and health: And lastly, it would raise the value of negroes in the island.—A North-American province, by this prohibition alone for a few years, from being deeply plunged in debt, has become independent, rich, and flourishing."

On this authority of Mr. Long I rest the question, whether the prohibition of further importations is that rash, impolitic, and completely ruinous measure, which it is so confidently declared to be with respect to our West-Indian plantations.

I do not, however, mean, in thus treating this branch of the subject, absolutely to exclude the question of indemnification on the supposition of possible disadvantages affecting the West Indies through the abolition of the slave-trade. But when gentlemen set up a claim of compensation merely on those general allegations, which are all that I have yet heard from them, I can only answer, let them produce their case in a distinct and speci-



fic form; and if upon any practicable or reasonable grounds it shall claim consideration, it will then be time enough for parliament to decide upon it.

I now come to another circumstance of great weight, connected with this part of the question. I mean the danger to which the islands are exposed from those negroes who are newly imported. This, Sir, like the observation which I lately made, is no mere speculation of ours; for here again I refer you to Mr. Long, the historian of Jamaica. He treats particularly of the dangers to be dreaded from the introduction of Coromantine negroes; an appellation under which are comprised several descriptions of negroes obtained on the Gold Coast, whose native country is not exactly known, and who are purchased in a variety of markets, having been brought from some distance inland. With a view of preventing insurrections, he advises, that "by laying a duty equal to a prohibition, no more of these Coromantines should be bought;" and after noticing one insurrection which happened through their means, he tells you of another in the following year, in which thirty-three Coromantines, "most of whom had been newly imported, suddenly rose, and in the space of an hour murdered and wounded no less than nineteen white persons."

To the authority of Mr. Long, both in this and other parts of his work, I may add the recorded opinion of the committee of the house of assembly of Jamaica itself; who, in consequence of a rebellion among the slaves, were appointed to enquire into the best means of preventing future insurrections. The committee reported, "That the rebellion had originated (like most or all others) with the Coromantines; and they proposed that a bill should be brought in for laying a higher duty on the importation of these particular negroes," which was intended to operate as a prohibition.

But the danger is not confined to the importation of Coromantines. Mr. Long, carefully investigating as he does the causes of such frequent insurrections, particularly at Jamaica, accounts for them from the greatness of its general importations.

"In two years and a half," says he, "27,000 negroes have been imported."—"No wonder we have rebellions! Twenty-seven thousand in two years and a half!" Why, Sir, I believe that in some late years there have been as many imported into the same island within the same period! Surely, Sir, when gentlemen talk so vehemently of the safety of the islands, and charge us with being so indifferent to it; when they speak of the calamities of St. Domingo, and of similar dangers impending over their own heads at the present hour, it ill becomes *them* to be the persons who are crying out for further importations. It ill becomes *them* to charge upon *us* the crime of stirring up insurrections—upon us who are only adopting the very principles, which Mr. Long—which in part even the legislature of Jamaica itself, laid down in the time of danger, with an avowed view to the prevention of any such calamity.

The house, I am sure, will easily believe it is no small satisfaction to me, that among the many arguments for prohibiting the slave-trade which crowd upon my mind, the security of our West-India possessions against internal commotions, as well as foreign enemies, is among the most prominent and most forcible. And here let me apply to my two right honourable friends, and ask them, whether in this part of the argument they do not see reason for *immediate* abolition! Why should you any longer import into those countries that which is the very seed of insurrection and rebellion? Why should you persist in introducing those latent principles of conflagration, which, if they should once burst forth, may annihilate in a single day the industry of an hundred years? Why will you subject yourselves, with open eyes, to the evident and imminent risk of a calamity, which may throw you back a whole century in your profits, in your cultivation, in your progress to the emancipation of your slaves? and disappointing at once every one of these golden expectations, may retard not only the accomplishment of that happy system which I have attempted to describe, but may cut off even your opportunity of taking any one introductory step? Let us begin from this time! Let us not commit these important interests to



any further hazard ! Let us prosecute this great object from this very hour ! Let us vote that the abolition of the slave-trade shall be immediate, and not left to I know not what future time or contingency ! Will my right honourable friends answer for the safety of the islands during any imaginable intervening period ? Or do they think that any little advantages of the kind which they state, can have any weight in that scale of expediency in which this great question ought undoubtedly to be tried ?

Thus stated, and thus alone, Sir, can it be truly stated, to what does the whole of my right honourable friend's arguments, on the head of expediency, amount ? It amounts but to this :—The colonies on the one hand would have to struggle with some few difficulties and disadvantages at the first, for the sake of obtaining on the other hand immediate security to their leading interests ; of ensuring, Sir, even their own political existence ; and for the sake also of immediately commencing that system of progressive improvement in the condition of the slaves, which is necessary to raise them from the state of brutes to that of rational beings, but which never can begin until the introduction of these new disaffected and dangerous Africans into the same gangs, shall have been stopped.

If any argument can in the slightest degree justify the severity that is now so generally practised in the treatment of the slaves, it must be the introduction of these Africans. It is the introduction of these Africans that renders all idea of emancipation for the present so chimerical ; and the very mention of it so dreadful. It is the introduction of these Africans that keeps down the condition of all plantation negroes. Whatever system of treatment is deemed necessary by the planters to be adopted towards these new Africans, extends itself to the other slaves also : instead therefore of deferring the hour when you will finally put an end to importations, vainly purposing that the condition of your present slaves should previously be mended, you must, in the very first instance, stop your importations, if you hope to introduce any rational or practicable



plan, either of gradual emancipation, or present general improvement.

Having now done with this question of expediency as affecting the islands, I come next to a proposition advanced by my right honourable friend\*, which appeared to intimate, that on account of some patrimonial rights of the West-Indians, the prohibition of the slave-trade might be considered as an invasion on their legal inheritance.

Now, in answer to this proposition, I must make two or three remarks, which I think my right honourable friend will find some considerable difficulty in answering.—First, I observe that his argument, if it be worth any thing, applies just as much to gradual as immediate abolition. I have no doubt, that at whatever period he should be disposed to say the abolition should actually take place, this defence will equally be set up; for it certainly is just as good an argument against an abolition seven, or seventy years hence, as against an abolition at this moment. It supposes, we have no right whatever to stop the importations; and even though the disadvantage to our plantations, which some gentlemen suppose to attend the measure of immediate abolition, should be admitted gradually to lessen by the lapse of a few years, yet in point of principle, the absence of all right of interference would remain the same. My right honourable friend, therefore, I am sure will not press an argument not less hostile to his proposition than to ours. But let us investigate the foundation of this objection, and I will commence what I have to say, by putting a question to my right honourable friend. It is chiefly on the presumed ground of our being bound by a parliamentary sanction heretofore given to the African slave-trade, that this argument against the abolition is rested. Does then my right honourable friend, or does any man in this house think, that the slave-trade has received any such parliamentary sanction, as must place it more out of the jurisdiction of the legislature for ever after, than the other branches of our national

\* Mr. Dundas.

commerce? I ask, is there any one regulation of any part of our commerce, which, if this argument be valid, may not equally be objected to, on the ground of its affecting some man's patrimony, some man's property, or some man's expectations? Let it never be forgotten, that the argument I am canvassing would be just as strong, if the possession affected were small, and the possessors humble; for on every principle of justice, the property of any single individual, or small number of individuals, is as sacred, as that of the great body of West-Indians. Justice ought to extend her protection with rigid impartiality to the rich and to the poor, to the powerful and to the humble. If this be the case, in what a situation does my right honourable friend's argument place the legislature of Britain? What room is left for their interference in the regulation of any part of our commerce? It is scarcely possible to lay a duty on any one article, which may not, when first imposed, be said in some way to affect the property of individuals, and even of some entire classes of the community. If the laws respecting the slave-trade imply a contract for its perpetual continuance, I will venture to say, there does not pass a year without some act, equally pledging the faith of parliament to the perpetuating of some other branch of commerce. In short, I repeat my observation, that no new tax can be imposed, much less can any prohibitory duty be ever laid on any branch of trade, that has before been regulated by parliament, if this principle be once admitted.

Before I refer to the acts of parliament by which the public faith is said to be pledged, let me remark also, that a contract for the continuance of the slave-trade must, on the principles which I shall presently insist on, have been void, even from the beginning; for if this trade is an outrage upon justice, and only another name for fraud, robbery and murder, will any man urge that the legislature could possibly by any pledge whatever incur the obligation of being an accessory, or I may even say a principal; in the commission of such enormities, by sanctioning their continuance? As well might an individual think himself bound by a promise to commit an assassination. I am

confident, gentlemen must see, that our proceedings on such grounds, would infringe all the principles of law, and subvert the very foundation of morality.

Let us now see, how far the acts themselves shew that there is this sort of parliamentary pledge to continue the African slave-trade. The act of 23d Geo. II. c. 31, is that by which we are supposed to be bound up by contract to sanction all those horrors now so incontrovertibly proved. How surprised then, Sir, must the house be to find, that by a clause of their very act, some of these outrages are expressly forbidden! It says, "No commander, or master of a ship trading to Africa, shall by fraud, force or violence, or by any indirect practice whatsoever, take on board or carry away from the coast of Africa, any negro, or native of the said country, or commit any violence on the natives, to the prejudice of the said trade, and that every person so offending shall for every such offence forfeit"—When it comes to the penalty, sorry am I to say, that we see too close a resemblance to the West-India law, which inflicts the payment of 30*l.* as the punishment for murdering a negro. The price of blood in Africa is 100*l.*; but even this penalty is enough to prove that the act at least does not sanction, much less does it engage to perpetuate enormities; and the whole trade has now been demonstrated to be a mass, a system of enormities; of enormities which incontrovertibly bid defiance not only to this clause, but to every regulation which our ingenuity can devise, and our power carry into effect. Nothing can accomplish the object of this clause but an extinction of the trade itself.

But, Sir, let us see what was the motive for carrying on the trade at all? The preamble of the act states it, "Whereas the trade to and from Africa is very advantageous to Great Britain, and necessary for the supplying the plantations and colonies thereunto belonging with a sufficient number of negroes at reasonable rates, and for that purpose the said trade should be carried on," &c.—Here then we see what the parliament had in view when it passed this act; and I have clearly shewn that



not one of the occasions on which it grounded its proceedings now exists. I may then plead, I think, the very act itself as an argument for the abolition. If it is shewn, that, instead of being "very advantageous" to Great Britain, this trade is the most destructive that can well be imagined to her interests; that it is the ruin of our seamen; that it stops the extension of our manufactures; if it is proved in the second place that it is not now necessary for the "supplying our plantations with negroes;" if it is further established that this traffick was from the very beginning contrary to the first principles of justice, and consequently that a pledge for its continuance, had one been attempted to have been given, must have been completely and absolutely void;—where then in this act of parliament is the contract to be found, by which Britain is bound, as she is said to be, never to listen to her own true interests, and to the cries of the natives of Africa? Is it not clear that all argument, founded on the supposed pledged faith of parliament, makes against those who employ it? I refer you to the principles which obtain in other cases. Every trade-act shews undoubtedly that the legislature is used to pay a tender regard to all classes of the community. But if for the sake of moral duty, of national honour, or even of great political advantage, it is thought right, by authority of parliament, to alter any long-established system, parliament is competent to do it. The legislature will undoubtedly be careful to subject individuals to as little inconvenience as possible; and if any peculiar hardship should arise, that can be distinctly stated, and fairly pleaded, there will ever, I am sure, be a liberal feeling towards them in the legislature of this country, which is the guardian of all who live under its protection. On the present occasion, the most powerful considerations call upon us to abolish the slave-trade; and if we refuse to attend to them on the alleged ground of pledged faith and contract, we shall depart as widely from the practice of parliament, as from the path of moral duty. If indeed there is any case of hardship, which comes within the proper cognizance of parliament, and calls for the exercise of its liberality,—well! But such a case

must be reserved for calm consideration, as a matter distinct from the present question.

I beg pardon for dwelling so long on the argument of expediency, and on the manner in which it affects the West Indies. I have been carried away by my own feelings on some of these points into a greater length than I intended, especially considering how fully the subject has been already argued. The result of all I have said, is, that there exists no impediment, no obstacle, no shadow of reasonable objection on the ground of pledged faith, or even on that of national expediency, to the abolition of this trade. On the contrary, all the arguments drawn from those sources plead for it, and they plead much more loudly, and much more strongly in every part of the question, for an immediate, than for a gradual abolition.

But now, Sir, I come to Africa. That is the ground on which I rest, and here it is that I say my right honourable friends do not carry their principles to their full extent.—Why ought the slave-trade to be abolished? Because it is incurable injustice. How much stronger then is the argument for immediate, than gradual abolition! By allowing it to continue even for one hour, do not my right honourable friends weaken—do not they desert, their own argument of its injustice? If on the ground of injustice it ought to be abolished at last, why ought it not now? Why is injustice to be suffered to remain for a single hour? From what I hear without doors, it is evident that there is a general conviction entertained of its being far from just; and from that very conviction of its injustice, some men have been led, I fear, to the supposition, that the slave-trade never could have been permitted to begin, but from some strong and irresistible necessity; a necessity, however, which, if it was fancied to exist at first, I have shewn cannot be thought by any man whatever to exist now. This plea of necessity, thus presumed, and presumed, as I suspect, from the circumstance of injustice itself, has caused a sort of acquiescence in the continuance of this evil. Men have been led to place it among the rank of those necessary evils, which are supposed to be the lot of

human creatures, and to be permitted to fall upon some countries or individuals, rather than upon others, by that Being, whose ways are inscrutable to us, and whose dispensations, it is conceived, we ought not to look into. The origin of evil is indeed a subject beyond the reach of human understandings; and the permission of it by the Supreme Being, is a subject into which it belongs not to us to enquire. But where the evil in question is a moral evil which a man can scrutinize, and where that moral evil has its origin with ourselves, let us not imagine that we can clear our consciences by this general, not to say irreligious and impious way of laying aside the question. If we reflect at all on this subject, we must see that every necessary evil supposes that some other and greater evil would be incurred were it removed: I therefore desire to ask, what can be that greater evil, which can be stated to overbalance the one in question?—I know of no evil that ever has existed, nor can imagine any evil to exist, worse than the tearing of seventy or eighty thousand persons annually from their native land, by a combination of the most civilized nations, inhabiting the most enlightened quarter of the globe, but more especially under the sanction of the laws of that nation which calls herself the most free and the most happy of them all. Even if these miserable beings were proved guilty of every crime before you take them off, (of which however not a single proof is adduced,) ought we to take upon ourselves the office of executioners? And even if we condescend so far, still can we be justified in taking them, unless we have clear proof that they are criminals?

But if we go much further,—if we ourselves tempt them to sell their fellow-creatures to us, we may rest assured, that they will take care to provide by every method, by kidnapping, by village-breaking, by unjust wars, by iniquitous condemnations, by rendering Africa a scene of bloodshed and misery, a supply of victims increasing in proportion to our demand. Can we then hesitate in deciding whether the wars in Africa are their wars or ours? It was our arms in the river Cameroon put into



the hands of the trader, that furnished him with the means of pushing his trade; and I have no more doubt that they are British arms, put into the hands of Africans, which promote universal war and desolation, than I can doubt their having done so in that individual instance.

I have shewn how great is the enormity of this evil, even on the supposition that we take only convicts and prisoners of war. But take the subject in the other way; take it on the grounds stated by the right honourable gentleman over the way; and how does it stand? Think of EIGHTY THOUSAND persons carried away out of their country by we know not what means! for crimes imputed! for light or inconsiderable faults! for debt perhaps! for the crime of witchcraft! or a thousand other weak and scandalous pretexts! besides all the fraud and kidnapping, the villainies and perfidy, by which the slave-trade is supplied. Reflect on these eighty thousand persons thus annually taken off! There is something in the horror of it, that surpasses all the bounds of imagination. Admitting that there exists in Africa something like to courts of justice; yet what an office of humiliation and meanness is it in us, to take upon ourselves to carry into execution the partial, the cruel, iniquitous sentences of such courts, as if we also were strangers to all religion, and to the first principles of justice! But that country, it is said, has been in some degree civilized, and civilized by us. It is said they have gained some knowledge of the principles of justice. What, Sir, have they gained principles of justice from us? Their civilization brought about by us!! Yes, we give them enough of our intercourse to convey to them the means, and to initiate them in the study of mutual destruction. We give them just enough of the forms of justice to enable them to add the pretext of legal trials to their other modes of perpetrating the most atrocious iniquity. We give them just enough of European improvements, to enable them the more effectually to turn Africa into a ravaged wilderness. Some evidences say, that the Africans are addicted to the practice of gambling; that they even sell their wives and children, and

ultimately themselves. Are these then the legitimate sources of slavery? Shall we pretend that we can thus acquire an honest right to exact the labour of these people? Can we pretend that we have a right to carry away to distant regions, men of whom we know nothing by authentic enquiry, and of whom there is every reasonable presumption to think, that those who sell them to us, have no right to do so? But the evil does not stop here. I feel that there is not time for me to make all the remarks which the subject deserves, and I refrain from attempting to enumerate half the dreadful consequences of this system. Do you think nothing of the ruin and the miseries in which so many other individuals, still remaining in Africa, are involved in consequence of carrying off so many myriads of people? Do you think nothing of their families which are left behind? of the connections which are broken? of the friendships, attachments, and relationships that are burst asunder? Do you think nothing of the miseries in consequence, that are felt from generation to generation? of the privation of that happiness which might be communicated to them by the introduction of civilization, and of mental and moral improvement? A happiness which you withhold from them so long as you permit the slave-trade to continue. What do you yet know of the internal state of Africa? You have carried on a trade to that quarter of the globe from this civilized and enlightened country; but such a trade, that, instead of diffusing either knowledge or wealth, it has been the check to every laudable pursuit. Instead of any fair interchange of commodities; instead of conveying to them from this highly favoured land, any means of improvement, you carry with you that noxious plant by which every thing is withered and blasted; under whose shade nothing that is useful or profitable to Africa will ever flourish or take root. Long as that continent has been known to navigators, the extreme line and boundaries of its coasts is all with which Europe is yet become acquainted; while other countries in the same parallel of latitude, through a happier system of intercourse, have reaped the blessings of a mutually beneficial com-



merce. But as to the whole interior of that continent you are, by your own principles of commerce, as yet entirely shut out: Africa is known to you only in its skirts. Yet even there you are able to infuse a poison that spreads its contagious effects from one end of it to the other, which penetrates to its very centre, corrupting every part to which it reaches. You there subvert the whole order of nature; you aggravate every natural barbarity, and furnish to every man living on that continent, motives for committing, under the name and pretext of commerce, acts of perpetual violence and perfidy against his neighbour.

Thus, Sir, has the perversion of British commerce carried misery instead of happiness to one whole quarter of the globe. False to the very principles of trade, misguided in our policy, and unmindful of our duty, what astonishing—I had almost said, what *irreparable* mischief, have we brought upon that Continent! I would apply this thought to the present question. How shall we ever repair this mischief? How shall we hope to obtain, if it be possible, forgiveness from Heaven for those enormous evils we have committed, if we refuse to make use of those means which the mercy of Providence hath still reserved to us for wiping away the guilt and shame with which we are now covered? If we refuse even this degree of compensation, if, knowing the miseries we have caused, we refuse even now to put a stop to them, how greatly aggravated will be the guilt of Great Britain! and what a blot will the history of these transactions for ever be in the history of this country! Shall we then DELAY to repair these injuries, and to begin rendering this justice to Africa? Shall we not count the days and hours that are suffered to intervene and to delay the accomplishment of such a work? Reflect, what an immense object is before you—what an object for a nation to have in view, and to have a prospect, under the favour of Providence, of being now permitted to attain! I think the house will agree with me in cherishing the ardent wish to enter without delay upon the measures necessary for these great ends: and I am sure that the immediate



abolition of the slave-trade is the first, the principal, the most indispensable act of policy, of duty, and of justice, that the legislature of this country has to take, if it is indeed their wish to secure those important objects to which I have alluded, and which we are bound to pursue by the most solemn obligations.

—There is, however, one argument set up as an universal answer to every thing that can be urged on our side; whether we address ourselves to gentlemen's understandings, or to their hearts and consciences. It is necessary I should remove this formidable objection; for though not often stated in distinct terms, I fear it is one which has a very wide influence. The slave-trade system, it is supposed, has taken so deep root in Africa, that it is absurd to think of its being eradicated; and the abolition of that share of trade carried on by Great Britain (and especially if her example is not followed by other powers) is likely to be of very little service. Give me leave to say in answer to so dangerous an argument, that we ought to be extremely sure indeed of the assumption on which it rests, before we venture to rely on its validity; before we decide that an evil which we ourselves contribute to inflict is incurable, and on that very plea, refuse to desist from bearing our part in the system which produces it. You are not sure, it is said, that other nations will give up the trade, if you should renounce it. I answer, if this trade is as criminal as it is asserted to be, or if it has in it a thousandth part of the criminality, which I, and others, after thorough investigation of the subject, charge upon it, God forbid that we should hesitate in determining to relinquish so iniquitous a traffic; even though it should be retained by other countries! God forbid, however, that we should fail to do our utmost towards inducing other countries to abandon a bloody commerce which they have probably been in good measure led by our example to pursue! God forbid, that we should be capable of wishing to arrogate to ourselves the glory of being singular in renouncing it!

—I tremble at the thought of gentlemen's indulging themselves in this argument (an argument as pernicious as it is futile)

which I am combating. "We are friends," say they, "to humanity. We are second to none of you in our zeal for the good of Africa,—but the French will not abolish,—the Dutch will not abolish. We wait therefore, on prudential principles, till they join us, or set us an example."

How, sir, is this enormous evil ever to be eradicated, if every nation is thus prudentially to wait till the concurrence of all the world shall have been obtained?—Let me remark too, that there is no nation in Europe that has, on the one hand, plunged so deeply into this guilt as Britain; or that is so likely, on the other, to be looked up to as an example, if she should have the manliness to be the first in decidedly renouncing it. But, Sir, does not this argument apply a thousand times more strongly in a contrary way? How much more justly may *other* nations point to *us*, and say, "Why should we abolish the slave-trade, when Great Britain has not abolished? Britain, free as she is, just and honourable as she is, and deeply also involved as she is in this commerce above all nations, not only has not abolished, but has refused to abolish.—She has investigated it well; she has gained the completest insight into its nature and effects; she has collected volumes of evidence on every branch of the subject. Her senate has deliberated—has deliberated again and again—and what is the result? She has gravely and solemnly determined to sanction the slave-trade. She sanctions it at least for a while—her legislature therefore, it is plain, sees no guilt in it, and has thus furnished us with the strongest evidence that she can furnish,—of the justice unquestionably,—and of the policy also, in a certain measure and in certain cases at least, of permitting this traffick to continue."

This, Sir, is the argument with which we furnish the other nations of Europe, if we again refuse to put an end to the slave-trade. Instead therefore of imagining, that by choosing to presume on their continuing it, we shall have exempted ourselves from guilt, and have transferred the whole criminality to them; let us rather reflect that on the very principle urged against us, we shall henceforth have to answer for their crimes,



as well as our own. We have strong reasons to believe that it depends upon us, whether other countries will persist in this bloody trade or not. Already we have suffered one year to pass away, and now that the question is renewed, a proposition is made for gradual, with the view of preventing immediate abolition. I know the difficulty that exists in attempting to reform long-established abuses; and I know the danger arising from the argument in favour of delay, in the case of evils which nevertheless are thought too enormous to be borne, when considered as perpetual. But by proposing some other period than the present, by prescribing some condition, by waiting for some contingency, or by refusing to proceed till a thousand favourable circumstances unite together; perhaps until we obtain the general concurrence of Europe; (a concurrence which I believe never yet took place at the commencement of any one improvement in policy or in morals) year after year escapes, and the most enormous evils go unredressed. We see this abundantly exemplified, not only in public, but in private life. Similar observations have been often applied to the case of personal reformation. If you go into the street, it is a chance but the first person who crosses you is one, "*Vivendi rectè qui prorogat horam.*" We may wait; we may delay to cross the stream before us, till it has run down; but we shall wait for ever, for the river will still flow on, without being exhausted. We shall be no nearer the object which we profess to have in view, so long as the step, which alone can bring us to it, is not taken. Until the actual, the only remedy is applied, we ought neither to flatter ourselves that we have as yet thoroughly laid to heart the evil we affect to deplore; nor that there is as yet any reasonable assurance of its being brought to an actual termination.

It has also been occasionally urged, that there is something in the disposition and nature of the Africans themselves, which renders all prospect of civilization on that continent extremely unpromising. "It has been known," says Mr. Frazer, in his evidence, "that a boy has been put to death, who was refused



to be purchased as a slave." This single story was deemed by that gentlemen a sufficient proof of the barbarity of the Africans, and of the inutility of abolishing the slave-trade. My honourable friend, however, has told you, that this boy had previously run away from his master three several times; that the master had to pay his value according to the custom of his country, every time he was brought back; and that partly from anger at the boy for running away so frequently, and partly to prevent a still further repetition of the same expense, he determined to put him to death.—Such was the explanation of the story given in the cross-examination. This, sir, is the signal instance that has been dwelt upon of African barbarity.—This *African*, we admit, was *unenlightened*, and altogether barbarous: but let us now ask what would a *civilized* and *enlightened West-Indian*, or a body of West-Indians, have done in any case of a parallel nature? I will quote you, Sir, a law passed in the West Indies, in the year 1722, which, in turning over the book, I happened just now to cast my eye upon; by which law, this very same crime of running away, is, by the legislature of the island,—by the grave and deliberate sentence of that enlightened legislature, punished with death: and this, not in the case only, of the third offence, but even in the very first instance. It is enacted, "that if any negro, or other slave shall withdraw himself from his master, for the term of six months; or any slave that was absent, shall not return within that time, it shall be adjudged felony, and every such person shall suffer death." There is also another West-Indian law, by which every negro's hand is armed against his fellow-negroes, by his being authorized to kill a run-away slave, and even having a reward held out to him for doing so. Let the house now contrast the two cases. Let them ask themselves which of the two exhibits the greater barbarity? Let them reflect, with a little candour and liberality, whether on the ground of any of those facts, and loose insinuations as to the sacrifices to be met with in the evidence, they can possibly reconcile to themselves the excluding of Africa from all means of civilization? Whether they can possibly vote

for the continuance of the slave-trade upon the principle, that the Africans have shewn themselves to be a race of *incorrigible barbarians*?

I hope, therefore, we shall hear no more of the moral impossibility of civilizing the Africans, nor have our understandings and consciences again insulted, by being called upon to sanction the slave-trade, until other nations shall have set the example of abolishing it. While we have been deliberating upon the subject, one nation, not ordinarily taking the lead in politics, nor by any means remarkable for the boldness of its councils, has determined on a gradual abolition; a determination, indeed, which, since it permits for a time the existence of the slave-trade, would be an unfortunate pattern for our imitation. France, it is said, will take up the trade, if we relinquish it. What? Is it supposed that in the present situation of St. Domingo, of an island which used to take three-fourths of all the slaves required by the colonies of France, she, of all countries, will think of taking it up? What countries remain? The Portuguese, the Dutch, and the Spaniards. Of those countries let me declare it is my opinion, that if they see us renounce the trade, after full deliberation, they will not be disposed, even on principles of policy, to rush further into it. But I say more: How are they to furnish the capital necessary for carrying it on? If there is any aggravation of our guilt, in this wretched business, greater than another, it is that we have stooped to be the carriers of these miserable beings from Africa to the West Indies for all the other powers of Europe. And now, Sir, if we retire from the trade altogether, I ask, where is that fund which is to be raised at once by other nations, equal to the purchase of 30 or 40,000 slaves? A fund, which if we rate them at 40*l.* or 50*l.* each, cannot make a capital of less than a million and a half, or two millions of money. From what branch of their commerce is it that these European nations will draw together a fund to feed this monster?—to keep alive this detestable commerce? And even if they should make the attempt, will not that immense chasm, which must instantly be created in the

other parts of their trade, from which this vast capital must be withdrawn in order to supply the slave-trade, be filled up by yourselves?—Will not these branches of commerce which they must leave, and from which they must withdraw their industry and their capitals, in order to apply them to the slave-trade, be then taken up by British merchants?—Will you not even in this case find your capital flow into these deserted channels?—Will not your capital be turned from the slave-trade to that natural and innocent commerce from which they must withdraw their capitals in proportion as they take up the traffick in the flesh and blood of their fellow-creatures?

The committee sees, I trust, how little ground of objection to our proposition there is in this part of our adversaries' argument.

Having now detained the house so long, all that I will further add, shall be on that important subject, the civilization of Africa, which I have already shewn that I consider as the leading feature in this question. Grieved am I to think that there should be a single person in this country, much more that there should be a single member in the British parliament, who can look on the present dark, uncultivated, and uncivilized state of that continent, as a ground for continuing the slave-trade,—as a ground not only for refusing to attempt the improvement of Africa, but even for hindering and intercepting every ray of light which might otherwise break in upon her,—as a ground for refusing to her the common chance and the common means, with which other nations have been blessed, of emerging from their native barbarism.

Here, as in every other branch of this extensive question, the argument of our adversaries pleads against them; for, surely, Sir, the present deplorable state of Africa, especially when we reflect that her chief calamities are to be ascribed to us, calls for our generous aid, rather than justifies any despair on our part of her recovery, and still less any further repetition of our injuries.

I will not much longer fatigue the attention of the house; but this point has impressed itself so deeply on my mind, that I must



trouble the committee with a few additional observations. Are we justified, I ask, on any one ground of theory, or by any one instance to be found in the history of the world, from its very beginning to this day, in forming the supposition which I am now combating? Are we justified in supposing that the particular practice which we encourage in Africa, of men's selling each other for slaves, is any symptom of a barbarism that is incurable? Are we justified in supposing that even the practice of offering up human sacrifices proves a total incapacity for civilization? I believe it will be found, and perhaps much more generally than is supposed, that both the trade in slaves, and the still more savage custom of offering human sacrifices, obtained in former periods, throughout many of those nations which now, by the blessings of Providence, and by a long progression of improvements, are advanced the farthest in civilization. I believe, Sir, that, if we will reflect an instant, we shall find that this observation comes directly home to our own selves; and that, on the same ground on which we are now disposed to proscribe Africa for ever from all possibility of improvement, we ourselves might, in like manner, have been proscribed and for ever shut out from all the blessings which we now enjoy.

There was a time, Sir, which it may be fit sometimes to revive in the remembrance of our countrymen, when even human sacrifices are said to have been offered in this island. But I would peculiarly observe on this day, for it is a case precisely in point, that the very practice of the slave-trade once prevailed among us. Slaves, as we may read in Henry's history of Great Britain, were formerly an established article of our exports. "Great numbers," he says, "were exported like cattle, from the British coast, and were to be seen exposed for sale in the Roman market." It does not distinctly appear, by what means they were procured; but there was unquestionably no small resemblance, in this particular point, between the case of our ancestors and that of the present wretched natives of Africa—for the historian tells you that "adultery, witchcraft, and debt were probably some of the chief sources of supplying the Roman market with British

slaves—that prisoners taken in war were added to the number—and that there might be among them some unfortunate gamblers who, after having lost all their goods, at length staked themselves, their wives, and their children.” Every one of these sources of slavery has been stated, and almost precisely in the same terms, to be at this hour a source of slavery in Africa. And these circumstances, Sir, with a solitary instance or two of human sacrifices, furnish the alleged proofs, that Africa labours under a natural incapacity for civilization; that it is enthusiasm and fanaticism to think that she can ever enjoy the knowledge and the morals of Europe; that Providence never intended her to rise above a state of barbarism; that Providence has irrevocably doomed her to be only a nursery for slaves for us free and civilized Europeans. Allow of this principle, as applied to Africa, and I should be glad to know why it might not also have been applied to ancient and uncivilized Britain. Why might not some Roman Senator, reasoning on the principles of some honourable gentlemen, and pointing to *British barbarians*, have predicted with equal boldness, “*There is a people that will never rise to civilization—there is a people destined never to be free—a people without the understanding necessary for the attainment of useful arts; depressed by the hand of nature below the level of the human species; and created to form a supply of slaves for the rest of the world.*” Might not this have been said, according to the principles which we now hear stated, in all respects as fairly and as truly of Britain herself, at that period of her history, as it can now be said by us of the inhabitants of Africa?

We, Sir, have long since emerged from barbarism—we have almost forgotten that we were once barbarians—we are now raised to a situation which exhibits a striking contrast to every circumstance, by which a Roman might have characterized us, and by which we now characterize Africa. There is indeed one thing wanting to complete the contrast, and to clear us altogether from the imputation of acting even to this hour as barbarians; for we continue to this hour a barbarous traffic in slaves: we



continue it even yet in spite of all our great and undeniable pretensions to civilization. We were once as obscure among the nations of the earth, as savage in our manners, as debased in our morals, as degraded in our understandings, as these unhappy Africans are at present. But in the lapse of a long series of years, by a progression slow, and for a time, almost imperceptible, we have become rich in a variety of acquirements, favoured above measure in the gifts of Providence, unrivalled in commerce, pre-eminent in arts, foremost in the pursuits of philosophy and science, and established in all the blessings of civil society: We are in the possession of peace, of happiness, and of liberty; we are under the guidance of a mild and beneficent religion; and we are protected by impartial laws, and the purest administration of justice: we are living under a system of government, which our own happy experience leads us to pronounce the best and wisest which has ever yet been framed; a system which has become the admiration of the world. From all these blessings, we must for ever have been shut out, had there been any truth in those principles which some gentlemen have not hesitated to lay down as applicable to the case of Africa. Had those principles been true, we ourselves had languished to this hour in that miserable state of ignorance, brutality, and degradation, in which history proves our ancestors to have been immersed. Had other nations adopted these principles in their conduct towards us; had other nations applied to Great Britain the reasoning which some of the senators of this very island now apply to Africa, ages might have passed without our emerging from barbarism; and we, who are enjoying the blessings of British civilization, of British laws, and British liberty, might, at this hour, have been little superior, either in morals, in knowledge, or refinement, to the rude inhabitants of the Coast of Guinea.

If then we feel that this perpetual confinement in the fetters of brutal ignorance, would have been the greatest calamity which could have befallen us; if we view with gratitude and exultation the contrast between the peculiar blessings we enjoy, and the



wretchedness of the ancient inhabitants of Britain; if we shudder to think of the misery which would still have overwhelmed us, had Great Britain continued to the present times to be the mart for slaves to the more civilized nations of the world, through some cruel policy of theirs, God forbid that we should any longer subject Africa to the same dreadful scourge, and preclude the light of knowledge, which has reached every other quarter of the globe, from having access to her coasts!

I trust we shall no longer continue this commerce, to the destruction of every improvement on that wide continent; and shall not consider ourselves as conferring too great a boon, in restoring its inhabitants to the rank of human beings. I trust we shall not think ourselves too liberal, if, by abolishing the slave-trade, we give them the same common chance of civilization with other parts of the world, and that we shall now allow to Africa the opportunity—the hope—the prospect of attaining to the same blessings which we ourselves, through the favourable dispensations of Divine Providence, have been permitted, at a much more early period, to enjoy. If we listen to the voice of reason and duty, and pursue this night the line of conduct which they prescribe, some of us may live to see a reverse of that picture, from which we now turn our eyes with shame and regret. We may live to behold the natives of Africa engaged in the calm occupations of industry, in the pursuits of a just and legitimate commerce. We may behold the beams of science and philosophy breaking in upon their land, which, at some happy period in still later times, may blaze with full lustre; and joining their influence to that of pure religion, may illuminate and invigorate the most distant extremities of that immense continent. Then may we hope that even Africa, though last of all the quarters of the globe, shall enjoy at length, in the evening of her days, those blessings which have descended so plentifully upon us in a much earlier period of the world. Then also will Europe, participating in her improvement and prosperity, receive an ample recompence for the tardy kindness, (if kindness it can be called)

of no longer hindering that continent from extricating herself out of the darkness which, in other more fortunate regions, has been so much more speedily dispelled.

—*Nos primus equis oriens afflavit anhelis ;  
Illic sera rubens accendit lumina Vesper.*

Then, Sir, may be applied to Africa, those words, originally used indeed with a different view :

*His demùm exactis—————  
Devenère locos lætos, et amœna vireta  
Fortunatorum nemorum, sedesque beatas :  
Largior hic campos Æther, et lumine vestit  
Purpureo.*

It is in this view, Sir,—it is an atonement for our long and cruel injustice towards Africa, that the measure proposed by my honourable friend most forcibly recommends itself to my mind. The great and happy change to be expected in the state of her inhabitants, is, of all the various and important benefits of the abolition, in my estimation, incomparably the most extensive and important.

I shall vote, Sir, against the adjournment ; and I shall also oppose to the utmost every proposition, which in any way may tend either to prevent, or even to postpone for an hour, the total abolition of the slave-trade : a measure which, on all the various grounds which I have stated, we are bound, by the most pressing and indispensable duty, to adopt.

The House divided on an amendment moved by Mr. Dundas, for inserting in the motion the word “ gradually,”

Ayes ..... 193

Noes ..... 125

and the question thus amended was then put, and, after a second division, carried,

Ayes ..... 230

Noes ..... 83

*April 27, 1792.*

THE House having resolved itself into a committee to consider further of the measures to be adopted for the gradual abolition of the Slave-trade, Mr. Dundas moved, "That it is the opinion of this committee, that it shall not be lawful to import any African negroes into the British colonies or plantations in ships owned and navigated by British subjects, at any time after the 1st of January 1800."

Upon this motion an amendment was proposed by Lord Mornington, to insert the "1st of January 1795," in the room of the "1st of January 1800."

MR. PITT lamented, that his efforts on this subject had hitherto not been successful, but he was consoled with the thought that the house had come to a resolution declarative of the infamy of this trade; that all parties had concurred in reprobating it; that even its advocates had been compelled to acknowledge its infamy. The question now was only the continuance of this abominable traffic, which even its friends thought so intolerable, that it ought to be crushed. Jamaica had imported one hundred and fifty thousand negroes in the course of twenty years, and this was admitted to be only one-tenth of the trade. Was there ever, could there be, any thing beyond the enormity of this infamous traffic? The very thought of it was beyond human endurance. It was allowed, however, that the trade was infamous, but the abolition of it was resolvable to a question of expediency; and then, when the trade was argued as a commercial case, its advocates, in order to continue it, deserted even the principles of commerce: So that a traffic in the liberty, the blood, the life, of human beings, was not to have even the advantages of the common rules of arithmetic which governed all other commercial dealings!

The point now in dispute was only one year, as he understood; for the amendment proposed the year 1795 for the abolition, while the year 1796 was only contended for on the other side. As to those who were concerned in the trade, a year



would not make much difference ; but did it make no alteration to the unhappy slaves ? It was true that, in the course of commercial concerns in general, it was said sometimes to be beneath the magnanimity of a man of honour to insist on a scrupulous exactness in his own favour upon a disputed item in accounts ; but did it make any part of our magnanimity to be exact in our own favour in the traffic of human blood ? When a man gave up 500*l.* or 100*l.* against himself upon a complicated reckoning, he was called generous, and, when he insisted on it in his own favour, he was deemed niggardly ; the common course, when parties disagreed, was, what the vulgar phrase called, “ to split the difference.” If he could feel that he was to calculate upon the subject in this way, the side on which he should determine it was in favour of the unhappy sufferers, not of those who oppressed them. But this one year was only to shew the planters that parliament were willing to be liberal to them. Sir, said Mr. Pitt, I do not understand complimenting away the lives of so many human beings. I do not understand the principle on which a few individuals are to be complimented, and their minds set at rest, at the expense and total sacrifice of the interest, the security, the happiness, of a whole quarter of the world, which, from our foul practices, has for a vast length of time been a scene of misery and horror. I say, because I feel, that every hour you continue this trade, you are guilty of an offence beyond your power to atone for ; and by your indulgence to the planters, thousands of human beings are to be miserable for ever. Notwithstanding the bill passed for regulating the middle passage, even now the loss of the trade is no less than ten per cent ; such is still the mortality of this deleterious traffic ! Every year in which you continue this abominable trade, you add thousands to the catalogue of misery, which if you could behold in a single instance, you would revolt with horror from the scene ; but the size of the misery prevents you from beholding it. Five hundred out of one thousand that are taken in this traffic, perish in this scene of horror,—are miserable victims brought to their

graves; this is the effect of this system of slavery.—The remaining part of this miserable groupe are tainted both in body and in mind, covered with disease and infection, infecting the very earth on which they tread, and the air in which they breathe, carrying with them the seeds of pestilence and insurrection to your islands. Let me then ask the house, whether I am improperly pressing upon the house a question, whether they can derive any advantage from these doubtful effects of a calculation on the continuance of the traffic; and whether they think that two will not be better than three years for its continuance? I feel the infamy of the trade so heavily, the impolicy of it so clearly, that I am ashamed I have not been able to convince the house to abandon it altogether at an instant—to pronounce with one voice the immediate and total abolition. There is no excuse for us, seeing this infernal traffic as we do. It is the very death of justice to utter a syllable in support of it. Sir, I know I state this subject with warmth:—I feel it is impossible for me not to do so, or if it was, I should detest myself for the exercise of moderation. I cannot, without suffering every feeling and every passion that ought to rise in the cause of humanity to sleep within me, speak coolly upon such a subject. Did they feel, as I think they ought, I am sure the decision of the house would be with us for a total and immediate abolition of this abominable traffic.

As to the probability upon this subject, that, in the year 1795, the plantations will not be in a state fit to carry on business without the importation of fresh negroes, he would say, that there was no probability of that conclusion. They would be in a situation in 1795 to go on without importation—they would be in that situation in 1794, they would be in that situation in 1795; for he had proved them to be in that situation in 1788. In short, unless he had misunderstood the subject, and unless some reason, much superior to any he had yet heard, were adduced, he should think it the most singular act that ever was done by a deliberative assembly, to refuse to assent to the proposed amend-

ment; it was by an express resolution declared to be the first object of their desire, the first object of their duty, and the first object of their inclination.

Lord Mornington's motion for the abolition in 1795 was negatived,

Ayes ..... 121

Noes ..... 161

A motion was afterwards made by Sir Edward Knatchbull, for the abolition to take place in 1796, which, upon a division, was carried,

Ayes ..... 151

Noes ..... 132

Thus the period of the cessation of the trade was fixed for the 1st of January 1796.

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### *April 30, 1792.*

ON a notice being given by Mr. Grey of a motion, which he intended to submit to the consideration of the House in the course of the next session, respecting a Reform in the representation of the people,

Mr. PITT rose:

He believed, he said, it was not strictly regular to enter into any observations upon a mere notice of a motion; and therefore he was under the correction of the chair, whether or not he should articulate a syllable.—[Go on! go on! was echoed, and re-echoed, from different parts of the house.]—He then proceeded. If ever there was an occasion in which the mind of every man, who had any feeling for the present, or hope for the future happiness of this country, should be interested, the present was the time for its exertion. The present was the time in which the whole house should lose sight of form in the regulation of debate, and apply at once to the substance of the subject. Nothing could be said, nothing could be whispered, upon this subject, at this time, that did not involve questions of the most extensive, the most serious, the most lasting importance to the people of this country, to the very being of the state. He had other motives, he confessed, besides the general importance of



the subject, to say a few words now upon it. It was a question on which he had thought attentively. He was unwilling to weary the house with many observations upon his own conduct, or what seemed not exactly to correspond with what he had professed in the earliest part of his public character; because he was convinced that the question to be brought forward on this subject, would involve something more than the character, the fortune, the connection, the liberty, or the life of any individual. It might affect the peace and tranquillity which, under the favour of Providence, this country had for a long time enjoyed, in a superior degree, perhaps, to any part of the habitable globe. It might affect us, who, from the time of general darkness and bondage to the present hour, had sat quietly, perceiving other powers struggling with tyranny and oppression, while we enjoyed our freedom; it might even bring us into anarchy and confusion, worse, if possible, than if we had to contend with despotism itself.

He thought the country should know what the opinions of public men were upon the subject now before them, and how they felt at this moment. He confessed they had a peculiar right to know from him his opinion on the subject of parliamentary reform. He could have wished, that a subject of this immense importance had been brought forward at a time when he was personally more able to take an active part in a debate than at present, but above all, on a day on which the house had no other matter to attend to. He wished also the honourable gentleman would bring it forward on some distinct proposition stated to the house, that they might, early in the next session of parliament, take the whole question into consideration; in which case he should, perhaps, have reserved himself until the day appointed for the consideration of the subject: but as this was a general notice, without any specific proposition, he must say he felt no difficulty in asserting, in the most decisive terms, that he objected both to the time and the mode in which this business was brought forward. He felt this subject so deeply, that he must speak on it without any reserve. He would there-

fore confess, that, in one respect, he had changed his opinion upon this subject, and he was not afraid to own it. He retained his opinion of the propriety of a reform in parliament, if it could be obtained without danger or mischief, by a general concurrence, pointing harmlessly at its object. But he confessed he was afraid, at this moment, that if agreed on by that house, the security of all the blessings we enjoyed would be shaken to the foundation. He confessed, he was not sanguine enough to hope that a reform at this time could safely be attempted. His object always had been, but now most particularly so, to give permanence to that which we actually enjoy, rather than remove any actually subsisting grievances.—He conceived that the beautiful system of our constitution, and the only security we had for the continuance of it, was in the house of commons; but he was sorry to confess, that security was imperfect, while there were persons who thought that the people were not adequately represented in parliament. It was essential to the happiness of the people, that they should be convinced that they, and the members of that house, felt an identity of interest; that the nation at large, and the representatives of the people, held a conformity of sentiment: this was the essence of a proper representative assembly; under this legitimate authority, a people could be said to be really free; and this was a state in which the true spirit of proper democracy could be said to subsist. This was the only mode by which freedom and due order could be well united. If attempts were made to go beyond this, they ended in a wild state of nature that mocked the name of liberty, and by which the human character was degraded, instead of being free. He once thought, and still thought, upon the point of the representation of the commons, that if some mode could be adopted, by which the people could have any additional security for a continuance of the blessings which they now enjoy, it would be an improvement in the constitution of this country. That was the extent of his object; farther he never wished to go; and if this could be obtained without the risk of losing what we have, he should think it wise to make the

experiment. When he said this, it was not because he believed there was any existing grievance in this country that was felt at this hour. On the contrary, he believed that at this moment we actually did enjoy as much happiness as we could, or that a rational man ought to hope for; and if he said otherwise, he should be dealing unfairly with the house, with the public, and with himself; for these were his genuine feelings. He believed that we were in a state of prosperity and progressive improvement seldom equalled, never excelled, by any nation at any period in the history of the world.

He then came to the time and mode of bringing this subject forward. Upon these points, every rational man had two things to consider. These were, the probability of success, and the risk to be run by the attempt. Upon the latter consideration, he owned, his apprehensions were very great: he feared the corruptions that might follow the attempt; and looking at it in both views, he saw nothing but discouragement. He saw no chance of succeeding in the attempt in the first place, but saw great danger of anarchy and confusion in the second. It was true, he had made some attempts upon this subject himself, but at what time? What were the circumstances in which he did so? There was then a general apprehension, which now, thank God, was referred to rather as a matter of history than any thing else; all fear of danger was entirely removed; but there was then a general feeling, that we were upon the verge of a public national bankruptcy, and a strong sense was entertained of practical grievances:—this was at the conclusion of the American war; succeeding a period, when the influence of the crown was declared to have increased, to be increasing, and that it ought to be diminished. Many thought, and he was of the number, that, unless there was a better connection between the parliament and the people, and an uniformity of sentiment between them, the safety of this country was endangered. Many moderate men, however, there were at that time who admitted, there were abuses that ought to be corrected; but who, having weighed the whole state of the case, even as it stood then, were of



opinion, that although some evil was to be met with, yet that, on the whole, the good preponderated, and therefore, from a fear of possible consequences, they voted against his plan of reformation. If in such a time, and under such circumstances, moderate men thought in this way, what would they think under the present circumstances? He put it not only to that house, but also to the country at large; and he would ask all moderate men in it, what were their feelings on this subject at this moment? He believed that he could anticipate the answer—"This is not a time to make hazardous experiments." Could we forget what lessons had been given to the world within a few years? Could we suppose that men felt the situation of this country, as now happily contrasted with others, to be in a deplorable condition? Could we expect that these moderate men would become converts to the new system attempted in another country?—a system which all men would reject. He hoped that such doctrine would not find many proselytes among the moderate and the peaceable; if not, there could be no hope of success, and consequently no wisdom in the attempt.

But it seemed that there was a great number of persons in this country who wished for a reform in parliament, and they were increasing daily. That their number was great, he was happy enough to doubt; what their interest or their vigour would be, if called upon to exert themselves, against the good sense and courage of the sober part of the community, did not occasion him much apprehension. He did not mean to allude to the sentiments of any particular member of that house for the purpose of being severe; but when they came in the shape of advertisements in newspapers, inviting the public as it were to repair to their standard and to join them, they should be reprobated, and the tendency of their meetings exposed to the people in their true colours. He was willing, as long as he could, to give gentlemen the best construction that could be put upon their actions, and to give them credit for such sentiments; but the advertisements he alluded to in the public newspapers, were sanctioned with the very name of the honourable gentleman who had given this notice.

He would say, that there should be a great deal of activity on the part of the friends of our constitution, who ought to take pains properly to address the public mind, and to keep it in that state which was necessary to preserve our present tranquillity. He had seen with concern, that those gentlemen of whom he spoke, who were members of that house, were connected with others who professed not reform only, but direct hostility to the very form of our government. This afforded suspicion that the motion for reform was nothing more than the preliminary to the overthrow of the whole system of our present government. If they succeeded, they would overthrow what he thought the best constitution that was ever formed on the habitable globe. These considerations led him to wish the house to take great care that no encouragement should be given to any step that might sap the very foundation of our constitution. When he saw these opinions published, and knew them to be connected with opinions that were libels on the form of our government—the hereditary succession to the throne—the hereditary titles of our men of rank—the total destruction of all subordination in the state, he confessed he felt no inclination to promise his support to the proposed motion for a parliamentary reform. It was to follow a madness which had been called liberty in another country—a condition at war with true freedom and good order—a state to which despotism itself was preferable—a state in which liberty could not exist for a day; if it appeared in the morning, it must perish before sun-set.

He begged leave to assure the house that he thought it his duty, to the last hour of his life, to oppose to the utmost of his power attempts of this nature; so much did he disapprove of the present attempt, that if he were called to choose either to hazard this, or for ever abandon all hopes or desire to have any reform at all, he should say he would have no reform whatever, and he believed that as a member of parliament, as an Englishman, as an honest man, it was his duty to make that declaration at once. He wished the honourable gentleman to reflect seriously on his character, and the stake he possessed in the coun-

try; and to consider how much might be lost by an indiscreet attempt upon the subject. He had then, he said, made a sort of compendium of all the objections, he should submit to the house and the public, if the motion should ever be made, and concluded with an encomium on the constitution of this country—a monument of human wisdom, which had been hitherto the exclusive blessing of the English nation.

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*February 1, 1793.*

The order of the day being moved for taking into consideration his Majesty's message of the 28th of January, it was read by the Speaker, as follows:

“GEORGE R.

“His Majesty has given directions for laying before the House of Commons, copies of several papers which have been received from M. Chauvelin, late minister plenipotentiary from the Most Christian King, by his Majesty's secretary of state for foreign affairs, and of the answers returned thereto; and likewise copy of an order made by his Majesty in council, and transmitted by his Majesty's commands to the said M. Chauvelin, in consequence of the accounts of the atrocious act recently perpetrated at Paris.

“In the present situation of affairs, his Majesty thinks it indispensably necessary to make a further augmentation of his forces by sea and land; and relies on the known affection and zeal of the House of Commons to enable his Majesty to take the most effectual measures, in the present important conjuncture, for maintaining the security and rights of his own dominions; for supporting his allies; and for opposing views of aggrandizement and ambition on the part of France, which would be at all times dangerous to the general interests of Europe, but are peculiarly so, when connected with the propagation of principles which lead to the violation of the most sacred duties, and are utterly subversive of the peace and order of all civil society.

G. R.”

Mr. PITT then rose:

Sir—I shall now submit to the house some observations on the many important objects which arise out of the communication of his Majesty's message, and out of the present situation of this country. And in proceeding to the consideration of that message, the attention of the house should in the first



instance, be strongly directed to that calamitous event,\* to that dreadful outrage against every principle of religion, of justice, and of humanity, which has created one general sentiment of indignation and abhorrence in every part of this island, and most undoubtedly has produced the same effect in every civilized country.

At the same time I am aware, that I should better consult not only my own feelings, but those of the house, if considerations of duty would permit me to draw a veil over the whole of this transaction, because it is, in fact, in itself, in all those circumstances which led to it, in all that attended it, and in all which have followed, or which are likely to follow it hereafter, so full of every subject of grief and horror, that it is painful for the mind to dwell upon it. It is a subject which, for the honour of human nature, it would be better, if possible, to dismiss from our memories, to expunge from the page of history, and to conceal it, both now and hereafter, from the observation of the world.

*Excidat ille dies ævo, neu postera credant  
Secula; nos certè taceamus, et obruta multâ  
Nocte tegi nostræ patiamur crimina gentis.*

These, Sir, are the words of a great historian † of France in a former period, and were applied to an occasion which has always been considered as an eternal reproach to the French nation: And the atrocious acts lately perpetrated at Paris are, perhaps, the only instances that furnish any match to that dreadful and complicated scene of proscription and blood. But whatever may be our feelings on this subject, since, alas! it is not possible that the present age should not be contaminated with its guilt; since it is not possible that the knowledge of it should not be conveyed by the breath of tradition to posterity, there is a duty which we are called upon to perform—to enter our solemn protestation, that, on every

\* The murder of the King of France.

† De Thou, who applies these words to the massacre of St. Bartholomew, and wishes that day could be blotted out of the history of France.

principle by which men of justice and honour are actuated, it is the foulest and most atrocious deed which the history of the world has yet had occasion to attest.

There is another duty immediately relating to the interest of this and of every other country. Painful as it is to dwell upon this deed, since we cannot conceal what has happened, either from the view of the present age or of posterity, let us not deprive this nation of the benefit that may be derived from reflecting on some of the dreadful effects of those principles which are entertained and propagated with so much care and industry by a neighbouring country. We see in this one instance concentrated together, the effect of principles, which originally rest upon grounds that dissolve whatever has hitherto received the best sanctions of human legislation, which are contrary to every principle of law, human and divine. Presumptuously relying on their deceitful and destructive theories, they have rejected every benefit which the world has hitherto received from the effect either of reason, experience, or even of Revelation itself. The consequences of these principles have been illustrated by having been carried into effect in the single person of one, whom every human being commiserates. Their consequences equally tend to shake the security of commerce, to rob the meanest individual in every country of whatever is most dear and valuable to him.

They strike directly against the authority of all regular government, and the inviolable personal situation of every lawful sovereign. I do feel it, therefore, not merely a tribute due to humanity, not merely an effusion of those feelings which I possess in common with every man in this country, but I hold it to be a proper subject of reflection to fix our minds on the effect of those principles which have been thus dreadfully attested, before we proceed to consider of the measures which it becomes this country to adopt, in order to avert their contagion, and to prevent their growth and progress in Europe.

However, notwithstanding that I feel strongly on this subject, I would, if possible, entreat of the house to consider

even that calamitous event rather as a subject of reason and reflection, than of sentiment and feeling. Sentiment is often unavailing, but reason and reflection will lead to that knowledge which is necessary to the salvation of this and of all other countries. I am persuaded the house will not feel this as a circumstance which they are to take upon themselves, but that they will feel it in the manner in which I state it, as a proof of the calamities arising out of the most abominable and detestable principles; as a proof of the absence of all morals, of all justice, of all humanity, and of every principle which does honour to human nature; and, that it furnishes the strongest demonstration of the dreadful outrage which the crimes and follies of a neighbouring nation have suggested to them. I am persuaded the house will be sensible that these principles, and the effects of them, are narrowly to be watched, that there can be no leading consideration more nearly connected with the prospect of all countries, and most of all, that there can be no consideration more deserving the attention of this house, than to crush and destroy principles which are so dangerous and destructive of every blessing this country enjoys under its free and excellent constitution. We owe our present happiness and prosperity, which has never been equalled in the annals of mankind, to a mixture of monarchical government. We feel and know we are happy under that form of government. We consider it as our first duty to maintain and reverence the British constitution, which, for wise and just reasons of lasting and internal policy, attaches inviolability to the sacred person of the Sovereign, though, at the same time, by the responsibility it has annexed to government, by the check of a wise system of laws, and by a mixture of aristocratic and democratical power in the frame of legislation, it has equally exempted itself from the danger arising from the exercise of absolute power on the one hand, and the still more dangerous contagion of popular licentiousness on the other. The equity of our laws, and the freedom of our political system, have been the envy of every surrounding nation. In this country no man, in consequence of



his riches or rank, is so high as to be above the reach of the laws, and no individual is so poor or inconsiderable as not to be within their protection. It is the boast of the law of England, that it affords equal security and protection to the high and the low, to the rich and the poor.

Such is the envied situation of England, which may be compared, if I may be allowed the expression, to the situation of the temperate zone on the surface of the globe, formed by the bounty of Providence for habitation and enjoyment, being equally removed from the polar frosts on the one hand, and the scorching heat of the torrid zone on the other; where the vicissitude of the seasons, and the variety of the climate, contribute to the vigour and health of its inhabitants, and to the fertility of its soil; where pestilence and famine are unknown, as also earthquakes, hurricanes, &c. with all their dreadful consequences. Such is the situation, the fortunate situation of Britain: and what a splendid contrast does it form to the situation of that country which is exposed to all the tremendous consequences of that ungovernable, that intolerable and destroying spirit, which carries ruin and desolation where-ever it goes!

Sir, this infection can have no existence in this happy land, unless it is imported, unless it is studiously and industriously brought into this country. These principles are not the natural produce of Great Britain, and it ought to be our first duty, and principal concern, to take the most effectual measures in order to stop their growth and progress in this country, as well as in the other nations of Europe.

Under this impression, I wish to bring the house to the consideration of the situation in which we stand with respect to France, and with respect to the general state of the different powers of Europe. This subject was very much discussed on the first day of the present session, and I had the good fortune to concur with a very large majority of the house in the address that was presented to his Majesty, for his most gracious speech to both houses of parliament. Gentlemen then drew their inferences from those notorious facts which every man's

observation presented to him : and those circumstances were supposed to excite every sentiment of jealousy and precaution. They induced the house to arm his Majesty, and the executive government, with those powers which were indispensably necessary for effectually providing for the safety of the country. Many weeks have now elapsed since the beginning of the session, when the country appeared to be in a critical situation. Let us consider what are the circumstances now to attract our attention at the moment when the message of his Majesty calls on us for farther decision.

The papers which contain the communication between this country and France, consist of two different parts. The one comprehends the communication between this country and France, prior to the period which attracted those sentiments of jealousy I have stated :—This part also contains those comments which have taken place since, and those explanations which have been entered into by his Majesty's permission, with a view, if possible, that our jealousy might be removed in consequence of some step that might be taken. The other part consists, either of what were notorious facts at the meeting of parliament, or of those notorious facts which, though not officially communicated by his Majesty, were very generally known to the public.

The first part of these papers has never before been made public. The date of the first communication is May 12th, 1792. And the communication from that period till the 8th of July, contains the system on which his Majesty acted between France and the other European powers. From that period, down to the meeting of parliament, his Majesty had most scrupulously observed the strictest neutrality with respect to France. He had taken no part whatever in the regulation of her internal government. He had given her no cause of complaint; and therefore the least return he might expect, was, that France would be cautious to avoid every measure that could furnish any just ground of complaint to his Majesty. He might also well expect that France would have felt a proper degree of respect for the rights of himself and his allies. His Majesty might most of all



expect, that, in the troubled state of that country, they would not have chosen to attempt an interference with the internal government of this country, for the sole purpose of creating dissension among us, and of disturbing a scene of unexampled felicity. But fortunately for this country, they did not succeed. The express assurances contained in the papers which have been printed and are now on the table, the very compact on the part of France does distinctly and precisely apply to every one of these points.

I have no doubt but gentlemen have applied the interval in perusing these papers with sufficient attention, to make it unnecessary for me to trouble them with more than the leading points. You will perceive, that the very first communication is from M. Chauvelin, May 12th, 1792, and contains this passage :

“ Thus the King (of France) saw himself forced into a war, which was already declared against him ; but, religiously faithful to the principles of the constitution, whatever may finally be the fate of arms in this war, France rejects all ideas of aggrandizement. She will preserve her limits, her liberty, her constitution, her unalienable right of reforming herself whenever she may think proper : she will never consent that, under any relation, foreign powers should attempt to dictate, or even dare to nourish a hope of dictating laws to her. But this very pride, so natural and so great, is a sure pledge to all the powers from whom she shall have received no provocation, not only of her constantly pacific dispositions, but also of the respect which the French well know how to shew at all times for the laws, the customs, and all the forms of government of different nations.

“ The King indeed wishes it to be known, that he would publicly and severely disavow all those of his agents at foreign courts in peace with France, who should dare to depart an instant from that respect, either by fomenting or favouring insurrections against the established order, or by interfering in any manner whatever in the interior policy of such states, under pretence of a proselytism, which, exercised in the dominions of friendly powers, would be a real violation of the law of nations.”

This paper therefore contains a declaration, that whatever



might be the fate of arms, France rejected all ideas of aggrandizement; she would preserve her rights, she would preserve her limits and her liberty. This declaration was made in the name of the king.

Gentlemen must remember, after the first revolution, and after the establishment of what they called the model of a government of liberty, the king wished it to be known, that he would publicly disavow all those of his agents at foreign courts, in peace with France, who should dare to depart an instant from that respect, either by fomenting or raising insurrections, or by interfering in any manner whatever in the internal government of such states, under pretence of proselytism, which would be a real violation of the law of nations. They have therefore passed, by anticipation, that sentence on their own conduct; and whether we shall pass a different sentence, is one of the objects of this day's consideration.

In the passage I have read, two distinct principles are laid down: the one, that whatever might be the fate of arms, France renounced all ideas of aggrandizement, and declared she would confine herself within her own territories; the other, that to foment and raise insurrections in neutral states; under pretence of proselytism, was a violation of the law of nations. It is evident to all Europe, her conduct has been directly the reverse of those principles, both of which she has trampled under foot, in every instance where it was in her power. In the answer to that note of M. Chauvelin, his Majesty expresses his concern for the war that had arisen, for the situation of his Most Christian Majesty, and for the happiness of his dominions. He also gives him a positive assurance of his readiness to fulfil, in the most exact manner, the stipulations of the treaty of navigation and commerce; and concludes with these words:

"Faithful to all his engagements, his Majesty will pay the strictest attention to the preservation of the good understanding which so happily subsists between him and his Most Christian Majesty, expecting with confidence, that, animated with the same sentiments, his Most Christian Majesty will not fail to contribute to the same end, by causing, on his part, the rights of his Majesty

and his allies to be respected, and by rigorously forbidding any step which might affect the friendship which his Majesty has ever desired to consolidate and perpetuate, for the happiness of the two empires."

We may also see what general assurances France thought fit to make to Great Britain, from a note from M. Chauvelin to Lord Grenville, dated June 8, 1792; where it is said,

"The King of the French is happy to renew to the King of Great Britain the formal assurance, that every thing which can interest the rights of his Britannic Majesty will continue to be the object of his most particular and most scrupulous attention.

"He hastens, at the same time, to declare to him, that the rights of all the allies of Great Britain, who shall not have provoked France by hostile measures, shall by him be no less religiously respected.

"In making, or rather renewing this declaration, the King of the French enjoys the double satisfaction of expressing the wish of a people, in whose eyes every war, which is not rendered necessary by a due attention to its defence, is essentially unjust, and of joining particularly in the wishes of his Majesty, for the tranquillity of Europe, which would never be disturbed, if France and England would unite in order to preserve it."

Such then, Sir, is the situation in which his Majesty stands with respect to France. During the transactions of the last summer, when France was engaged in a war against the powers of Austria and Prussia, his Majesty departed in no shape from that neutrality. His Majesty did no one act from which it could be justly inferred, that he was friendly to that system. But what, let me ask the house, has been the conduct of France as to those express reiterated assurances, applied to the public concerns which I have now detailed?

These assurances went to three points: to a determination to abstain from views of aggrandizement; not to interfere with the government of neutral nations, which they admitted to be a violation of the law of nations; and to observe the rights of his Majesty and his allies. What has been the conduct of France



on these three points, under the new system? She has, both by her words and actions, manifested a determination, if not checked by force, to act on principles of aggrandizement. She has completely disclaimed that maxim, "that whatever was the fate of their arms in war, France rejected all ideas of aggrandizement." She has made use of the first moment of success to publish a contradiction to that declaration. She has made use of the first instance of success in Savoy, without even attempting the ceremony of disguise, (after having professed a determination to confine herself within her ancient limits,) to annex it for ever as an eighty-fourth department to the present sovereignty of France. They have by their decree announced a determination to carry on a similar operation in every country into which their arms can be carried, with a view, in substance, if not in name, to do the same thing in every country where they can with success.

Their decree of the 15th of December contains a fair illustration and confirmation of their principles and designs. They have by that decree expressly stated the plan on which they mean to act. Whenever they obtain a temporary success, whatever be the situation of the country into which they come, whatever may have been its antecedent conduct, whatever may be its political connections, they have determined not to abandon the possession of it, till they have effected the utter and absolute subversion of its form of government, of every ancient, every established usage, however long they may have existed, and however much they may have been revered. They will not accept, under the name of liberty, any model of government, but that which is conformable to their own opinions and ideas; and all men must learn from the mouth of their cannon the propagation of their system in every part of the world. They have regularly and boldly avowed these instructions, which they sent to the commissioners who were to carry these orders into execution. They have stated to them what this house could not believe, they have stated to them a revolutionary principle and order, for the purpose of being applied in every country in which the French arms are crowned with success. They have stated, that



they would organize every country by a disorganizing principle; and afterwards, they tell you all this is done by the will of the people. Where-ever our arms come, revolutions must take place, dictated by the will of the people. And then comes this plain question, what is this will of the people? It is the power of the French. They have explained what that liberty is which they wish to give to every nation; and if they will not accept of it voluntarily, they compel them. They take every opportunity to destroy every institution that is most sacred and most valuable in every nation where their armies have made their appearance; and under the name of liberty, they have resolved to make every country in substance, if not in form, a province dependent on themselves, through the despotism of jacobin societies. This has given a more fatal blow to the liberties of mankind, than any they have suffered, even from the boldest attempts of the most aspiring monarch. We see, therefore, that France has trampled under foot all laws, human and divine. She has at last avowed the most insatiable ambition, and greatest contempt for the law of nations, which all independent states have hitherto professed most religiously to observe; and unless she is stopped in her career, all Europe must soon learn their ideas of justice—law of nations—models of government—and principles of liberty from the mouth of the French cannon.

I gave the first instance of their success in Savoy, as a proof of their ambition and aggrandizement. I wish the house to attend to the practical effect of their system, in the situation of the Netherlands. You will find, in some of the correspondence between France and this country, this declaration on the part of France:

“She has renounced, and again renounces every conquest, and her occupation of the Low Countries shall only continue during the war and the time which may be necessary to the Belgians to ensure and consolidate their liberty; after which, they will be independent and happy. France will find her recompence in her felicity.”

I ask whether this can mean any thing else, than that they hope to add the Netherlands, as an 84th or 85th department, to

the French republic; whether it does not mean a subjugation of the Netherlands, to the absolute power of France, to a total and unequalled dependence on her? If any man entertains doubts upon the subject, let him look at the allegations of Dumourier, enforced by martial law. What was the conduct of this general, when he arrived at Brussels? Did he not assemble the inhabitants in the most public part of their city to elect the primary assemblies? How agreeable must have been his arrival in the Netherlands, by his employing threats to procure a general illumination on his entrance into Brussels! A hollow square of the French troops was drawn round the tree of liberty, to prevent the natives from pulling down the emblem of French freedom. This shews how well disposed the people were to receive the French system of liberty! This is the manner in which their principles are carried into effect in the different countries of Europe. I may here mention the conduct of the convention, on the occasion of an address from the people of Mons, in which they desire that the province of Hainault might be added as an 85th department of France. The convention referred the address to a committee, to report the form in which countries, wishing to unite with France, were to be admitted into the union. The convention could not decide upon it, and therefore they sent it to a committee to point out the manner in which they were to make their application for that purpose, so that the receiving of them was to be a fixed and standing principle, which in its consequences, if not timely prevented, must destroy the liberties and independence of England, as well as of all Europe.

I would next proceed to their confirmed pledge, not to interfere in the government of other neutral countries. What they have done here is in countries which, under some pretence or other, they have made their enemies. I need not remind the house of the decree of the 19th of November, which is a direct attack on every government in Europe, by encouraging the seditious of all nations to rise up against their lawful rulers, and by promising them their support and assistance. By this decree, they hold out an encouragement to insurrection and rebellion in every

country in the world. They shew you they mean no exception, by ordering this decree to be printed in all languages. And therefore I might ask any man of common sense, whether any nation upon earth could be out of their contemplation at the time they passed it? And whether it was not meant to extend to England, whatever might be their pretences to the contrary? It is most manifest they mean to carry their principles into every nation, without exception, subvert and destroy every government, and to plant on their ruins their sacred tree of liberty.

Some observations, to which they have affected to give the name of explanations, have been applied to this decree, and are these: "Now to come to the three points which can alone make an object of difficulty at the court of London, the executive council observe respecting the first, which is the decree of the 19th of November, that we have not been properly understood by the ministry of his Britannic Majesty, when they accuse us of having given an explanation *which announces to the seditious of all nations, what are the cases in which they may previously count on the support and assistance of France.* Nothing could be more foreign than this reproach to the sentiments of the national convention, and to the explanation we have given of them; and we did not think it was possible we should be charged with the open design of favouring the *seditious*, at the very moment, when we declare that it would be *wronging the national convention, if they were charged with the project of protecting insurrections, and with the commotions that may break out in any corner of a state, of joining the ring-leaders, and of thus making the cause of a few private individuals that of the French nation.*

"We have said, and we desire to repeat it, that the decree of the 19th of November could not have any application, unless to the single case in which the GENERAL WILL of a nation clearly and unequivocally expressed, should call the French nation to its assistance and fraternity. Sedition can certainly never be construed into the GENERAL WILL. These two ideas mutually repel each other, since a sedition is not and cannot be any other than the movement of a small number against the nation at large.



And this movement would cease to be seditious, provided all the members of a society should at once rise, either to reform its government, or to change its form *in toto*, or for any other object.

“The Dutch were assuredly not seditious, when they formed the generous resolution of shaking off the yoke of Spain; and when the general will of that nation called for the assistance of France, it was not reputed a crime in Henry IV, or in Elizabeth of England, to have listened to them. The knowledge of the *general will* is the only basis of the transactions of nations with each other; and we can only treat with any government whatever on this principle, that such a government is deemed *the organ of the general will of the nation governed*.

“Thus when by this natural interpretation, the decree of the 19th of November is reduced to what it truly implies, it will be found, that it announces nothing more than an act of the general will, and that beyond any doubt so effectually founded in right, that it was scarcely worth the trouble to express it. On this account, the executive council thinks that the evidence of this right might, perhaps, have been dispensed with, by the national convention, and did not deserve to be made the object of a particular decree; but with the interpretation that precedes it, it cannot give uneasiness to any nation whatever.”

To all this I shall only observe, that in the whole context of their language, on every occasion, they shew the clearest intention to propagate their principles all over the world. Their explanations contain only an avowal and repetition of the offence. They have proscribed royalty as a crime, and will not be satisfied but with its total destruction. The dreadful sentence which they have executed on their own unfortunate monarch, applies to every sovereign now existing. And lest you should not be satisfied that they mean to extend their system to this country, the conduct of the national convention has applied itself, by repeated acts, to yourselves by name, which makes any explanation on their part unsatisfactory and unavailing. There is no society in England, however contemptible in their numbers, however desperate in their principles, and questionable in their

existence, who possessed treason and disloyalty, who were not cherished, justified, and applauded, and treated even with a degree of theatrical extravagance at the bar of the national convention. You have also a list of the answers given to them at that bar. And, after all this, am I to ask you, whether England is one of the countries into which they wish to introduce a spirit of proselytism? which, exercised in the dominions of friendly powers, they themselves admit, would be a violation of the law of nations.

On the third point it is unnecessary for me to expatiate,—I mean on the violation of the rights of his Majesty, or of his allies.

To insist upon the opening of the river Scheldt, is an act of itself, in which the French nation had no right to interfere at all, unless she was the sovereign of the Low Countries, or boldly professed herself the general arbitress of Europe. This singular circumstance was an aggravation of their case, because they were bound by the faith of solemn and recent treaties to secure to the Dutch the exclusive navigation of the Scheldt, and to have opposed the opening of that river, if any other power had attempted it. If France were the sovereign of the Low Countries, she would only succeed to the rights which were enjoyed by the house of Austria: and if she possessed the sovereignty, with all its advantage, she must also take it with all its incumbrances, of which the shutting up of the Scheldt was one. France can have no right to annul the stipulations relative to the Scheldt, unless she has also the right to set aside, equally, all the other treaties between all the powers of Europe, and all the other rights of England, or of her allies. England will never consent that France shall arrogate the power of annulling at her pleasure, and under the pretence of a natural right of which she makes herself the only judge, the political system of Europe, established by solemn treaties, and guaranteed by the consent of all the powers. Such a violation of rights as France has been guilty of, it would be difficult to find in the history of the world. The conduct of that nation is in

the highest degree arbitrary, capricious, and founded upon no one principle of reason or justice. They declare this treaty was antiquated, and extorted by despotism, or procured by corruption. But what happened recently in the last year? This new and enlightened nation renewed her assurances of respecting all the rights of all his Majesty's allies, without any exception, without any reservation, so that the advancement of this claim is directly contrary to their recent professions. From the treaty of Munster, down to the year 1785, the exclusive navigation of the Scheldt has been one of the established rights of Holland. We are told it is to be said, no formal requisition has been made by Holland for the support of this country. I beg gentlemen to consider, whether ships going up the Scheldt, after a protest of the States General, was not such an act as to have justified them in calling upon this country for a contingent of men. If this house means substantial good faith to its engagements, if it retains a just sense of the solemn faith of treaties, it must shew a determination to support them. Without entering too far upon this subject, let me call to their attention, for a moment, one circumstance,—I mean the sudden effect and progress of French ambition, and of French arms. If from that circumstance, Holland had just reason to be afraid to make a formal requisition; if she had seen just reason not to do what she might have been well justified in doing, that was no reason why we should not observe our treaty. Are we to stand by as indifferent spectators, and look at France trampling upon the ancient treaties of the allies of this country? Are we to view with indifference the progress of French ambition, and of French arms, by which our allies are exposed to the greatest danger? This is surely no reason for England to be inactive and slothful. If Holland has not immediately called upon us for our support and assistance, she may have been influenced by motives of policy, and her forbearance ought not to be supposed to arise from her indifference about the river Scheldt. If Holland had not applied to England when Antwerp was taken, the French might have overrun her territory. And unless we



wish to stand by, and to suffer state after state to be subverted under the power of France, we must now declare our firm resolution effectually to oppose those principles of ambition and aggrandizement, which have for their object the destruction of England, of Europe, and of the world.

The next thing is, whether we see any thing in these papers, which furnishes an answer to the past, or gives any security for the future? What does the explanation amount to on the subject of the treaty of our allies? It refers to the possibility of negotiation at an indefinite period. She says, "she (France) has renounced, and again renounces every conquest, and her occupation of the Low Countries shall only continue during the war, and the time which may be necessary to the Belgians to ensure and consolidate their liberty; after which, they will be independent and happy, and France will find her recompense in their felicity." What is this but an avowal of their former declarations?

On the subject of interference with neutral nations, there is one or two explanations of the decree of the 19th of November, which has been so often discussed. We are, indeed, told it is injurious to suppose the National Convention could have intended to apply this decree to any country but where, by the public will, they have been called to give assistance and fraternity. This is in fact to advertise for treason and rebellion. Is there any man who could give credit to the reception which the English societies received in France? Though their numbers are too contemptible for the animadversion of the law, or the notice of our own executive government, they were considerable enough for the national convention. They tell you they are the clear, undisputed, constituted organ of the will of the people at large. What reliance can be placed on all their explanations, after the avowal of principles to the last degree dangerous to the liberty, the constitution, the independence, and the very existence of this country?

My time and my strength would fail me, if I were to attempt to go through all those various circumstances, which are connected with this subject. I shall take the liberty of reading a

passage from a publication which came into my hands this morning, and I am extremely glad to have seen collected together, so many instances in which the conduct of France is detected. In a note from M. Chauvelin, dated December 27th, 1792, he complains of the harsh construction which the British ministry had put on the conduct of France, and professes the strongest friendship for Great Britain. And yet, on the 31st of December, 1792, that is in four days after, one of the members of the executive council, who had given these assurances to England, wrote this letter to the friends of liberty, and equality, in all the sea-ports in France.

“The government of England is arming, and the King of Spain, encouraged by this, is preparing to attack us. These two tyrannical powers, after persecuting the patriots in their own territories, think, no doubt, that they shall be able to influence the judgment to be pronounced on the tyrant Louis. They hope to frighten us. But no! a people who has made itself free; a people who has driven out of the bosom of France, and as far as the distant borders of the Rhine, the terrible army of the Prussians and Austrians; the people of France will not suffer laws to be dictated to them by a tyrant

“The King and his parliament mean to make war against us! will the English republicans suffer it? Already these free men shew their discontent, and the repugnance which they have to bear arms against their brothers, the French. Well! we will fly to their succour; we will make a descent on the island; we will lodge there fifty thousand caps of liberty; we will plant there the sacred tree, and we will stretch out our arms to our republican brethren; *the tyranny of their government will soon be destroyed*. Let every one of us be strongly impressed with this idea!—MONGE.”

Such is the declaration of the sentiments of the minister of the marine; a declaration which separates not only the king, but the king and parliament of Great Britain from the people, who are called republicans. What faith can be put in assurances given on the part of France by M. Chauvelin, on the 27th of

December, when, in four days after, we find the minister of the marine writing such a letter? It was to be hoped we might have seen reasons, perhaps, in consequence of friendly explanations, for not going to war. But such explanations as this communication contains, have been justly rejected. I shall not detain the house longer on this subject.

I shall state now what appears to be the state of the negotiation. I take the conduct of France to be inconsistent with the peace and liberty of Europe. They have not given us satisfaction with respect to the question in issue. It is true, what they call explanations have taken place; but their principles, and the whole manner of their conduct, are such, that no faith can be put in their declarations. Their conduct gives the lie to their public professions; and, instead of giving satisfaction on the distinct articles, on which you have a right to claim a clear and precise explanation, and shewing any desire to abandon those views of conquest and aggrandizement, to return within their ancient limits, and to set barriers to the progress of their destructive arms, and to their principles, still more destructive; instead of doing so, they have given,—explanations I cannot call them, but an avowal of those very things you complain of. And in the last paper from M. Chauvelin, which may therefore be considered as the *ultimatum*, are these words:

“After so frank a declaration, which manifests such a sincere desire of peace, his Britannic Majesty’s ministers ought not to have any doubts with regard to the intentions of France. If her explanations appear insufficient, and if we are still obliged to hear a haughty language; if hostile preparations are continued in the English ports, after having exhausted every means to preserve peace, we will prepare for war with the sense of the justice of our cause, and of our efforts to avoid this extremity. We will fight the English, whom we esteem, with regret,—but we will fight them without fear.”

This is an ultimatum to which you cannot accede. They have neither withdrawn their armies from the neighbouring nations, nor shewn the least disposition to withdraw them. If



France is really desirous of maintaining friendship and peace with England, she must shew herself disposed to renounce her views of aggression and aggrandizement, and to confine herself within her own territory, without insulting other governments, without disturbing their tranquillity, without violating their rights. And unless she consent to these terms, whatever may be our wishes for peace, the final issue must be war. As to the time, as to the moment when war is to commence, if there is yet any possibility of satisfactory explanation, and security for the future, it is not to the last moment precluded. But I should disguise my sentiments to the house, if I stated, that I thought it in any degree probable. This country has always been desirous of peace. We desire it still, but such as may be real and solid, and consistent with the interests and dignity of Britain, and with the general security of Europe. War, whenever it comes, will be preferable to peace without honour, without security, and which is incompatible either with the external safety, or the internal happiness of this country.

I have endeavoured to comprehend as much as possible, though I am sensible I have left a great deal untouched. If any topic should afterwards arise, I trust I shall meet with the indulgence of the house in stating it. I shall now move, "That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, to return his Majesty the thanks of this house for his most gracious message, and the communication of the papers, which, by his Majesty's command, have been laid before us.

"To offer his Majesty our heartfelt condolence on the atrocious act lately perpetrated at Paris, which must be viewed by every nation in Europe as an outrage on religion, justice, and humanity, and as a striking and dreadful example of the effects of principles which lead to the violation of the most sacred duties, and are utterly subversive of the peace and order of all civil society.

"To represent to his Majesty, that it is impossible for us not to be sensible of the views of aggrandizement and ambition which, in violation of repeated and solemn professions, have

been openly manifested on the part of France, and which are connected with the propagation of principles incompatible with the existence of all just and regular government; that under the present circumstances, we consider a vigorous and effectual opposition to those views, as essential to the security of every thing that is most dear and valuable to us as a nation, and to the future tranquillity and safety of all other countries.

“That impressed with these sentiments, we shall, with the utmost zeal and alacrity, afford his Majesty the most effectual assistance, to enable his Majesty to make a further augmentatin of his forces by sea and land, and to act as circumstances may require in the present important conjuncture, for maintaining the security and honour of his crown, for supporting the just rights of his allies, and for preserving to his people the undisturbed enjoyment of the blessings, which, under the Divine Providence, they receive from the British constitution !”

The address was agreed to without a division.

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*February 12, 1793.*

THE order of the day was moved for taking into consideration the following message from his Majesty :

“ GEORGE R.

“ His Majesty thinks proper to acquaint the House of Commons, that the assembly now exercising the powers of government in France, have, without previous notice, directed acts of hostility to be committed against the persons and property of his Majesty’s subjects, in breach of the law of nations, and of the most positive stipulations of treaty; and have since, on the most groundless pretences, actually declared war against his Majesty and the United Provinces. Under the circumstances of this wanton and unprovoked aggression, his Majesty has taken the necessary steps to maintain the honour of his crown, and to vindicate the rights of his people; and his Majesty relies with confidence on the firm and effectual support of the House of Commons, and on the zealous exertions of a brave and loyal people, in prosecuting a just and necessary war, and in endeavouring, under the blessing of Provi-

dence, to oppose an effectual barrier to the farther progress of a system which strikes at the security and peace of all independent nations, and is pursued in open defiance of every principle of moderation, good faith, humanity and justice.

“ In a cause of such general concern, his Majesty has every reason to hope for the cordial co-operation of those powers who are united with his Majesty by the ties of alliance, or who feel an interest in preventing the extension of anarchy and confusion, and in contributing to the security and tranquillity of Europe. G. R.”

As soon as the message was read,

MR. PITT rose and observed, that in proposing to the house an address in answer to his Majesty's message, he did not conceive that there could be any necessity, in the present instance, at least in one view of the subject, for troubling them much at large. Whatever difference of opinion might formerly have existed with respect to subjects, on which, however, the great majority both of that house and the nation had coincided in sentiment, whatever doubts might be entertained as to the interest, which this country had in the recent transactions on the continent, whatever question might be made of the satisfaction to which this country was intitled, or whatever question might be made of the mode of conduct which had been pursued by government, which lately had not been carried so far as to produce even a division; yet when the situation in which we now stood was considered, when those circumstances which had occurred to produce an alteration in the state of affairs since the last address, were taken into the account, he could not doubt but that there would be one unanimous sentiment and voice expressed on the present occasion. The question now was, not what degree of danger or insult we should find it necessary to repel, from a regard to our safety, or from a sense of honour; it was, not whether we should adopt in our measures a system of promptitude and vigour, or of tameness and procrastination; whether we should sacrifice every other consideration to the continuance of an uncertain and insecure peace—When war was declared, and the event no longer in our option, it re-



mained only to be considered, whether we should prepare to meet it with a firm determination, and support his Majesty's government with zeal and courage against every attack. War now was not only declared, but carried on at our very doors; a war which aimed at an object no less destructive than the total ruin of the freedom and independence of this country. In this situation of affairs, he would not do so much injustice to the members of that house, whatever differences of opinion might formerly have existed, as to suppose there could be any but one decision, one fixed resolution, in this so urgent necessity, in this imminent and common danger, by the ardour and firmness of their support, to testify their loyalty to their sovereign, their attachment to the constitution, and their sense of those inestimable blessings which they had so long enjoyed under its influence. Confident, however, as he was, that such would be their unanimous decision, that such would be their determined and unalterable resolution, he should not consider it as altogether useless to take a view of the situation of the country at the time of his Majesty's last message, of the circumstances which had preceded and accompanied it, and of the situation in which we now stood, in consequence of what had occurred during that interval.

When his Majesty, by his message, informed them, that in the present situation of affairs he conceived it indispensably necessary to make a farther augmentation of his forces, they had cheerfully concurred in that object, and returned in answer, what then was the feeling of the house, the expression of their affection and zeal, and their readiness to support his Majesty in those purposes, for which he had stated an augmentation of force to be necessary. They saw the justice of the alarm which was then entertained, and the propriety of affording that support which was required. He should shortly state the grounds upon which they had then given their concurrence. They considered that whatever temptations might have existed to this country from ancient enmity and rivalry, paltry motives indeed! or whatever opportunity might have been afforded by the tumult-

tuons and distracted state of France, or whatever sentiments might be excited by the transactions which had taken place in that nation, his Majesty had uniformly abstained from all interference in its internal government, and had maintained, with respect to it, on every occasion, the strictest and most inviolable neutrality.

Such being his conduct towards France, he had a right to expect on their part a suitable return; more especially, as this return had been expressly conditioned for by a compact, into which they entered, and by which they engaged to respect the rights of his Majesty and his allies, not to interfere in the government of any neutral country, and not to pursue any system of aggrandizement, or make any addition to their dominions, but to confine themselves, at the conclusion of the war, within their own territories. These conditions they had all grossly violated, and had adopted a system of ambitious and destructive policy, fatal to the peace and security of every government, and which in its consequences had shaken Europe itself to its foundation. Their decree of the 19th of November, which had been so much talked of, offering fraternity and alliance to all people who wish to recover their liberty, was a decree not levelled against particular nations, but against every country where there was any form of government established; a decree not hostile to individuals, but to the human race; which was calculated every where to sow the seeds of rebellion and civil contention, and to spread war from one end of Europe to the other, from one end of the globe to the other. While they were bound to this country by the engagements which he had mentioned, they had shewed no intention to exempt it from the consequences of this decree. Nay, a directly contrary opinion might be formed, and it might be supposed that this country was more particularly aimed at by this very decree, if we were to judge from the exultation with which they had received from different societies in England every address expressive of sedition and disloyalty, and from the eager desire which they had testified to encourage and cherish the growth of such sentiments. Not only

had they shewed no inclination to fulfil their engagements, but had even put it out of their own power, by taking the first opportunity to make additions to their territory in contradiction to their own express stipulations. By express resolutions for the destruction of the existing government of all invaded countries, by the means of jacobin societies, by orders given to their generals, by the whole system adopted in this respect by the national assembly, and by the actual connection of the whole country of Savoy, they had marked their determination to add to the dominions of France, and to provide means, through the medium of every new conquest, to carry their principles over Europe. Their conduct was such, as in every instance had militated against the dearest and most valuable interests of this country.

The next consideration was, that under all the provocations which had been sustained from France, provocations which, in ordinary times, and in different circumstances, could not have failed to have been regarded as acts of hostility, and which formerly, not even a delay of twenty-four hours would have been wanting to have treated as such, by commencing an immediate war of retaliation, his Majesty's ministers had prudently and temperately advised all the means to be previously employed of obtaining reasonable satisfaction, before recourse should be had to extremities. Means had been taken to inform their agents, even though not accredited, of the grounds of jealousy and complaint on the part of this country, and an opportunity had been afforded through them of bringing forward any circumstances of explanation, or offering any terms of satisfaction. Whether the facts and explanations which these agents had brought forward were such as contained any proper satisfaction for the past, or could afford any reasonable assurance with respect to the future, every member might judge from the inspection of the papers. He had already given it as his opinion, that if there was no other alternative than either to make war or depart from our principles, rather than recede from our principles a war was preferable to a peace; because a peace,



purchased upon such terms, must be uncertain, precarious, and liable to be continually interrupted by the repetition of fresh injuries and insults. War was preferable to such a peace, because it was a shorter and a surer way to that end which the house had undoubtedly in view as its ultimate object—a secure and lasting peace. What sort of peace must that be in which there was no security? Peace he regarded as desirable only so far as it was secure. If, said Mr. Pitt, you entertain a sense of the many blessings which you enjoy, if you value the continuance and safety of that commerce which is a source of so much opulence, if you wish to preserve and render permanent that high state of prosperity by which this country has for some years past been so eminently distinguished, you hazard all these advantages more, and are more likely to forfeit them, by submitting to a precarious and disgraceful peace, than by a timely and vigorous interposition of your arms.—By tameness and delay you suffer that evil which might now be checked, to gain ground, and which, when it becomes indispensable to oppose, may perhaps be found irresistible.

It had on former debates been alleged, that by going to war we expose our commerce. Is there, he would ask, any man so blind and irrational, who does not know that the inevitable consequence of every war must be much interruption and injury to commerce? But, because our commerce was exposed to suffer, was that a reason why we should never go to war? Was there no combination of circumstances, was there no situation in the affairs of Europe, such as to render it expedient to hazard for a time a part of our commercial interests? Was there no evil greater, and which a war might be necessary to avoid, than the partial inconvenience to which our commerce was subjected, during the continuance of hostile operations? But he begged pardon of the house for the digression into which he had been led—while he talked as if they were debating about the expediency of a war, war was actually declared: we were at this moment engaged in a war.

He now came to state what had occurred since his Majesty's

last message; and to notice those grounds which had served as a pretext for the declaration of war. When his Majesty had dismissed M. Chauvelin, what were then the hopes of peace? He was by no means sanguine in such hopes, and he had stated to the house that he then saw but little probability that a war could be avoided. Such then was his sentiment, because the explanations and conduct of the French agent were such as afforded him but little room to expect any terms which this country could, either consistently with honour or a regard to its safety, accept. Still, however, the last moment had been kept open to receive any satisfactory explanation which might be offered. But what, it might be asked, was to be the mode of receiving such explanation? When his Majesty had dismissed M. Chauvelin, as, by the melancholy catastrophe of the French monarch, the only character in which he had ever been acknowledged at the British court had entirely ceased, eight days had been allowed him for his departure, and if during that period he had sent any more satisfactory explanation, still it would have been received. Had any disposition been testified to comply with the requisitions of Lord Grenville, still an opportunity was afforded of intimating this disposition. Thus had our government pursued to the last a conciliatory system, and left every opening for accommodation, had the French been disposed to embrace it. M. Chauvelin, however, instantly quitted the country, without making any proposition. Another agent had succeeded, (M. Maret) who, on his arrival in this country, had notified himself as the chargé-d'affaires on the part of the French republic, but had never, during his residence in the kingdom, afforded the smallest communication.

What was the next event which had succeeded? An embargo was laid on all the vessels and persons of his Majesty's subjects who were then in France. This embargo was to be considered as not only a symptom, but as an act of hostility. It certainly had taken place without any notice being given, contrary to treaty, and against all the laws of nations. Here perhaps it might be said, that on account of their stopping certain ships loaded with

corn for France, the government of Great Britain might be under the same charge; to this point he should come presently. He believed if government were chargeable with any thing, it might rather be, that they were even too slow in asserting the honour and vindicating the rights of this country. If he thought that his Majesty's ministers wanted any justification, it would be for their forbearance, and not for their promptitude, since to the last moment they had testified a disposition to receive terms of accommodation, and left open the means of explanation. Notwithstanding this violent and outrageous act, such was the disposition to peace in his Majesty's ministers, that the channels of communication, even after this period, were not shut: a most singular circumstance happened, which was the arrival of intelligence from his Majesty's minister at the Hague on the very day when the embargo became known here, that he had received an intimation from General Dumourier, that the general wished an interview, in order to see if it were yet possible to adjust the differences between the two countries, and to promote a general pacification. Instead of treating the embargo as an act of hostility, and forbearing from any communication, even after this aggression, his Majesty's ministers, on the same day on which the embargo was made known to them, gave instructions to the ambassador at the Hague, to enter into a communication with General Dumourier; and they did this with great satisfaction, on several accounts: first, because it might be done without committing the king's dignity; for the general of an army might, even in the very midst of war, without any recognition of his authority, open any negotiation of peace. But this sort of communication was desirable also, because, if successful, it would be attended with the most immediate effects, as its tendency was immediately to stop the progress of war, in the most practical, and perhaps, in the only practical way. No time was therefore lost in authorizing the king's minister at the Hague to proceed in the pursuit of so desirable an object, if it could be done in a safe and honourable mode, but not otherwise. But before the answer of government could reach the ambassador, or any means



be adopted for carrying the object proposed into execution, war was declared, on the part of the French, against this country. If then we were to debate at all, we were to debate whether or not we were to repel those principles, which not only were inimical to this, and to every other government, but which had been followed up in acts of hostility to this country. We were to debate whether or not we were to resist an aggression which had already been commenced. He would however refer the house, not to observations of reasoning, but to the grounds which had been assigned by the assembly themselves in their declaration of war. But first, he must again revert for a moment to the embargo. He then stated, that a detention of ships, if no ground of hostility had been given, was, in the first place, contrary to the law of nations. In the second place, there was an actual treaty between the two countries, providing for this very circumstance: and this treaty (if not set aside by our breach of it, which he should come to presently) expressly said, that, "in case of a rupture, time shall be given for the removal of persons and effects."

He should now proceed to the declaration itself. It began with declaring, "That the King of England has not ceased, especially since the revolution of the 10th of August 1792, to give proofs of his being evil-disposed towards the French nation, and of his attachment to the coalition of crowned heads." Notwithstanding the assertion that his Majesty had not ceased to shew his evil dispositions towards the French nation, they had not attempted to shew any acts of hostility previous to the 10th of August; nor in support of the charge of his attachment to the coalition of crowned heads, had they been able to allege any fact, except his supposed accession to the treaty between the Emperor of Germany and the King of Prussia. This treaty had already, this evening, been the subject of conversation: it had then been mentioned, which he should now repeat, that the fact, thus alleged, was false, and entirely destitute of foundation; and that no accession to any such treaty had ever taken place on the part of his Majesty. And not only had he

entered into no such treaty, but no step had been taken, and no engagement formed on the part of our government, to interfere in the internal affairs of France, or attempt to dictate to them any form of constitution. He declared that the whole of the interference of Great Britain had been (in consequence of French aggressions) with the general view of seeing whether it was possible, either by our own exertions, or in concert with any other powers, to repress this French system of aggrandizement and aggression, with the view of seeing whether we could not re-establish the blessings of peace, whether we could not, either separately, or jointly with other powers, provide for the security of our own country, and the general security of Europe.

The next charge brought by the national assembly was, "That at the period aforesaid, he ordered his ambassador at Paris to withdraw, because he would not acknowledge the provisional executive council, created by the legislative assembly." It was hardly necessary for him to discuss a subject with which all were already so well acquainted. After the horrors of the 10th of August, which were paralleled but not eclipsed by those of the 2d of September, and the suspension of the French monarch, to whom alone the ambassador had been sent, it certainly became proper to recall him. He could not remain to treat with any government to whom he was not accredited; and the propriety of his being recalled would appear still more evident, when it was considered that it was probable that the banditti who had seized upon the government would not long retain their power; and, in fact, in the course of a month, they had been obliged to yield to the interest of a different party, but of a description similar to their own. It was also to be remarked, that this circumstance of recalling the ambassador had never till now been complained of as an act of hostility. When a government was overturned, it became a fair question how long an interval should intervene till that government should be acknowledged? and especially if that change of government was accompanied with all the circumstances of tumult and distraction, it certainly became a matter of extreme hardship that a war

should be the consequence to the nation which should refuse to acknowledge it in the first instance. The force of this reasoning became increased in the particular application, when it was considered, that France had not yet established any constitution of its own; that all, hitherto, was merely provisional and temporary; and that, however the present republican system might be confirmed by force, or change of opinion, a little before, the voice of the nation, as far as its wish could be collected, had expressed itself in favour of a monarchy.

They proceeded to state, as farther grounds of their declaration of war, "That the cabinet of St. James's has ceased, since the same period (the 10th of August), to correspond with the French ambassador at London, on pretext of the suspension of the heretofore king of the French. That, since the opening of the national convention, it has refused to resume the usual correspondence between the two states, and to acknowledge the powers of this convention. That it has refused to acknowledge the ambassador of the French republic, although provided with letters of credit in its name." M. Chauvelin had been received at this court as ambassador of the king, and in no other capacity or character. From the period of the suspension of the king, he, for some months, ceased to hold any communication with the government here, or to act in any capacity; nor was it till the month of December that he had received his letter of credence to act here as the ambassador of the French republic. With respect to the charge of not having acknowledged the convention, he confessed it to be true. When these letters of credence had been tendered, they were refused; but it was to be considered whether it would have been proper to have recognised them, after the repeated instances of offence, for which no compensation had been made, and of which, indeed, every fresh act presented not only a repetition, but an aggravation. Indeed, it would have been impossible at that period, without shewing a deviation from principle, and a tameness of disposition, to have recognised their authority, or accepted of the person who presented himself in the character of their ambassador. At that



very moment, it was to be recollected, they were embarked in the unjust and inhuman process which had terminated in the murder of their king—an event which had every where excited sentiments of the utmost horror and indignation! Would it have been becoming in our government first to have acknowledged them at such a moment, when the power they had assumed was thus cruelly and unjustly exercised against that very authority which they usurped? But, whatever might be the feelings of abhorrence and indignation, which their conduct on this occasion could not fail to excite, he should by no means hold out these feelings as a ground for hostility, nor should he ever wish to propose a war of vengeance. The catastrophe of the French monarch, they ought all to feel deeply; and consistently with that impression, be led more firmly to resist those principles from which an event of so black and atrocious a nature had proceeded; principles which, if not opposed, might be expected in their progress to lead to the commission of similar crimes; but, notwithstanding government had been obliged to decline all communication which tended to acknowledge the authority of the convention, still, as he had said before, they had left open the means of accommodation; nor could that line of conduct which they had pursued, be stated as affording any ground of hostility.

He should now consider, collectively, some of the subsequent grounds which they had stated in their declaration, which were expressed in the following articles:

“ That the court of St. James’s has attempted to impede the different purchases of corn, arms, and other commodities ordered in England, either by French citizens or the agents of the republic.

“ That it has caused to be stopped, several boats and ships loaded with grain for France, contrary to the treaty of 1786, while exportation to other foreign countries was free.

“ That in order still more effectually to obstruct the commercial operations of the republic in England, it obtained an act of parliament prohibiting the circulation of assignats.

“That in violation of the fourth article of the treaty of 1786, it obtained another act, in the month of January last, which subjects all French citizens, residing in, or coming into England, to forms the most inquisitorial, vexatious, and dangerous.

“That at the same time, and contrary to the 1st article of the peace of 1783, it granted protection and pecuniary aid not only to the emigrants, but even to the chiefs of the rebels, who have already fought against France; that it has maintained with them a daily correspondence, evidently directed against the French revolution: that it has also received the chiefs of the rebels of the French West-India colonies.”

All these had been stated as provocations; but what sort of provocations? What, he would ask, was a provocation?—That we had indeed, taken measures, which, if considered by themselves, and not as connected with the situation of affairs in which they were adopted, might perhaps be considered in the light of provocations, he would allow; but if these measures were justified by the necessity of circumstances—if they were called for by a regard to our own safety and interests—they could only be viewed as temperate and moderate precautions. And in this light, these grounds, assigned in the declaration, could only be regarded as frivolous and unfounded pretences. With respect to the charge of having stopped supplies of grain and other commodities, intended for France, what could be more ridiculous than such a pretext? When there was reason to apprehend that France intended an attack upon the allies of this country, and against the country itself, upon which, at the same time, it depended for the stores and ammunitions necessary for carrying on hostilities, was it natural to suppose that they should furnish, from their own bosom, supplies to be turned against themselves and their allies? Could they be such children in understanding, could they be such traitors in principle, as to furnish to their enemies the means of hostility and the instruments of offence? What was the situation of France with respect to this country? Had they not given sufficient cause for jealousy of their hostile intentions? By their decree of the 19th of November, they had declared war against all governments. They had possessed them-

selves of Flanders, and were there endeavouring to establish, by force, what they styled a system of freedom, while they actually menaced Holland with an invasion. Another ground which they had stated in their declaration as an act of hostility on the part of our government was, that they had not suffered assignats to be circulated in this country. Truly, they had reason to be offended that we would not receive what was worth nothing; and that, by exercising an act which came completely within our own sovereignty with respect to the circulation of any foreign paper currency, we thus avoided a gigantic system of swindling! If such, indeed, were the pretences which they brought forward as grounds for a declaration of war, it was matter of wonder that, instead of a sheet of paper, they did not occupy a volume, and proved that their ingenuity had been exhausted before their modesty had been at all affected. Of much the same nature was that other pretext, with respect to the passing of the alien bill; a bill absolutely necessary for the safety of the country, as it shielded us from the artifice of the seditious, perhaps the dagger of the assassin. This bill they had held out as an infringement of the treaty of commerce. It could be no infringement of their treaty, as in the treaty itself it was expressly declared, that nothing was to be considered as an infringement, unless, first, proper explanations had taken place. Secondly, it was not to be expected that any treaty could supersede the propriety of adopting new measures in a new situation of affairs. Such was the case, when an inundation of foreigners had poured into this country under circumstances entirely different from those which were provided for by the bill. But who were those who complained of the severity of the regulations adopted by the alien bill in this country? The very persons who, during the late transactions in their own country, had adopted restrictions of police ten times more severe, but of which our government, however much its subjects might be affected, had never made the smallest complaint.

The next ground, assigned in the declaration, was the armament which had taken place in this country.

“That in the same spirit, without any provocation, and when



all the maritime powers are at peace with England, the cabinet of St. James's has ordered a considerable naval armament, and an augmentation of the land forces.

“That this armament was ordered at a moment when the English minister was bitterly persecuting those who supported the principles of the French revolution in England, and was employing all possible means, both in parliament and out of it, to cover the French republic with ignominy, and to draw upon it the execration of the English nation, and of all Europe.”

And, under what circumstances had the armament complained of taken place? At the period when the French, by their conduct with regard to the treaty of the Scheldt, shewed their intention to disregard the obligation of all treaties, when they had begun to propagate principles of universal war, and to discover views of unbounded conquest. Was it to be wondered that, at such a time, we should think it necessary to take measures of precaution, and to oppose, with determination, the progress of principles, not only of so mischievous a tendency, but which, in their immediate consequences, threatened to be so fatal to ourselves and our allies? Indeed they now seemed rather to despair of these principles being so generally adopted, and attended with such striking and immediate success as they had at first fondly imagined. How little progress these principles had made in this country they might be sufficiently convinced by that spirit, which had displayed itself, of attachment to the constitution, and those expressions of a firm determination to support it, which had appeared from every quarter. If, indeed, they mean to attack us, because we do not like French principles, then would this indeed be that sort of war which had so often been alleged and deprecated on the other side of the house—a war against opinions. If they mean to attack us because we love our constitution, then indeed it would be a war of extirpation; for not till the spirit of Englishmen was exterminated, would their attachment to the constitution be destroyed, and their generous efforts be slackened in its defence.

The next articles of complaint on the part of the French were,

“ That the object of this armament, intended against France, was not even disguised in the English parliament.

“ That although the provisional executive council of France has employed every measure for preserving peace and fraternity with the English nation, and has replied to calumnies and violation of treaties only by remonstrances, founded on the principles of justice, and expressed with the dignity of free men ; the English minister has persevered in his system of malevolence and hostility, continued the armaments, and sent a squadron to the Scheldt to disturb the operations of the French in Belgium.

“ That, on the news of the execution of Louis, he carried his outrages to the French republic to such a length, as to order the ambassador of France to quit the British territory within eight days.

“ That the King of England has manifested his attachment to the cause of that traitor, and his design of supporting it by different hostile resolutions adopted in his council, both by nominating generals of his land army, and by applying to parliament for a considerable addition of land and sea forces, and putting ships of war in commission.”

They clearly shewed their enmity to that constitution, by taking every opportunity to separate the King of England from the nation, and by addressing the people as distinct from the government. Upon the point of their fraternity he did not wish to say much : he had no desire for their affection. To the people they offered fraternity, while they would rob them of that constitution by which they are protected, and deprive them of the numerous blessings which they enjoy under its influence. In this case, their fraternal embraces resembled those of certain animals who embrace only to destroy.

Another ground which they had assigned was the grief which had been expressed in the British court at the fate of their unhappy monarch. Of all the reasons he ever heard for making war against another country, that of the French upon this occasion was the most extraordinary : they said they would make war on us, first, because we loved our own constitution ; se-

condly, because we detested their proceedings; and lastly, because we presumed to grieve at the death of their murdered king. Thus would they even destroy those principles of justice, and those sentiments of compassion, which led us to reprobate their crimes, and to be afflicted at their cruelties. Thus would they deprive us of that last resource of humanity—to mourn over the misfortunes and sufferings of the victims of their injustice. If such was the case, it might be asked, in the emphatic words of the Roman writer, *Quis gemitus Populo Romano liber erit?* They would not only endeavour to destroy our political existence, and to deprive us of the privileges which we enjoyed under our excellent constitution, but they would eradicate our feelings as men; they would make crimes of those sympathies which were excited by the distresses of our common nature; they would repress our sighs and restrain our tears. Thus, except the specific fact, which was alleged as a ground of their declaration of war, namely, the accession of his Majesty to the treaty between Austria and Prussia, which had turned out to be entirely false and unfounded, or the augmentation of our armament, a measure of precaution indispensably requisite for the safety of the country, and the protection of its allies, all the others were merely unjust, unfounded, absurd, and frivolous pretexts—pretexts which never could have been brought to justify a measure of which they were not previously strongly desirous, and which shewed that, instead of waiting for provocation, they only sought a pretence of aggression. The death of Louis, though it only affected the individual, was aimed against all sovereignty, and shewed their determination to carry into execution that intention, which they had so often professed, of exterminating all monarchy. As a consequence of that monstrous system of inconsistency which they pursued, even while they professed their desire to maintain a good understanding with this country, the minister of the marine had written a letter to the sea-port towns, ordering them to fit out privateers: for what purpose but the projected view of making depredations on our commerce? While they affected to complain of our ar-



mament, they had passed a decree to fit out fifty sail of the line—an armament which, however, it was to be observed, existed only in the decree.

He feared that, by this long detail, he had wearied the patience of the house, and occupied more of their time than he at first intended. The pretexts, which he had been led to examine, alleged as grounds for the declaration of war, were of a nature that required no refutation. They were such as every man could see through; and in many of his remarks he doubted not he had been anticipated by that contempt with which the house would naturally regard the weak reasoning, but wicked policy, of these pretexts.

He now came to his conclusion.—We, said Mr. Pitt, have, in every instance, observed the strictest neutrality with respect to the French: we have pushed, to its utmost extent, the system of temperance and moderation: we have held out the means of accommodation: we have waited till the last moment for satisfactory explanation. These means of accommodation have been slighted and abused, and all along there has appeared no disposition to give any satisfactory explanation. They have now, at last, come to an actual aggression, by seizing our vessels in our very ports, without any provocation given on our part; without any preparations having been adopted but those of necessary precaution, they have declared, and are now waging war. Such is the conduct which they have pursued; such is the situation in which we stand. It now remains to be seen whether, under Providence, the efforts of a free, brave, loyal, and happy people, aided by their allies, will not be successful in checking the progress of a system, the principles of which, if not opposed, threaten the most fatal consequences to the tranquillity of this country, the security of its allies, the good order of every European government, and the happiness of the whole of the human race!

Mr. PITT then proceeded to move the following address in answer to his Majesty's message:

“That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, to return his Majesty the thanks of this house for his most gracious

message, informing us, that the assembly, now exercising the powers of government in France, have, without previous notice, directed acts of hostility to be committed against the persons and property of his Majesty's subjects, in breach of the law of nations and of the most positive stipulations of treaty; and have since, on the most groundless pretences, actually declared war against his Majesty and the United Provinces: to assure his Majesty that, under the circumstances of this wanton and unprovoked aggression, we most gratefully acknowledge his Majesty's care and vigilance in taking the necessary steps for maintaining the honour of his crown, and vindicating the rights of his people: that his Majesty may rely on the firm and effectual support of the representatives of a brave and loyal people, in the prosecution of a just and necessary war, and in endeavouring, under the blessing of Providence, to oppose an effectual barrier to the farther progress of a system which strikes at the security and peace of all independent nations, and is pursued in open defiance of every principle of moderation, good faith, humanity, and justice.

“That, in a cause of such general concern, it must afford us great satisfaction to learn that his Majesty has every reason to hope for the cordial co-operation of those powers who are united with his Majesty by the ties of alliance, or who feel an interest in preventing the extension of anarchy and confusion, and in contributing to the security and tranquillity of Europe.

“That we are persuaded, that whatever his Majesty's faithful subjects must consider as most dear and sacred, the stability of our happy constitution, the security and honour of his Majesty's crown, and the preservation of our laws, our liberty, and our religion; are all involved in the issue of the present contest; and that our zeal and exertions shall be proportioned to the importance of the conjuncture, and to the magnitude and value of the objects for which we have to contend.”

After the address had been seconded by Mr. Powys, Mr. Fox spoke at considerable length against the motion, concluding with moving an amendment to the following purport:

“ We learn, with the utmost concern, that the assembly, who now exercise the powers of government in France, have directed the commission of acts of hostility against the persons and property of your Majesty's subjects, and that they have since actually declared war against your Majesty, and the United Provinces.

“ We humbly beg leave to assure your Majesty, that your Majesty's faithful Commons will exert themselves with the utmost zeal in the maintenance of the honour of your Majesty's crown, the vindication of the rights of your people, and nothing shall be wanting on our part that can contribute to that firm and effectual support which your Majesty has so much reason to expect from a brave and loyal people, in repelling every hostile attempt against this country, and in such other exertions as may be necessary to induce France to consent to such terms of pacification, as may be consistent with the honour of your Majesty's crown, the security of your allies, and the interests of your people.”

The amendment was negatived, and the address, as moved by Mr. Pitt, was agreed to without a division.

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### *March 11, 1793.*

The House having resolved itself into a Committee of Supply,

Mr. PITT rose, and addressed the Committee as follows :

It is impossible, in the present situation of affairs, not to look to the means of providing for those exigencies which must arise, and of prosecuting the struggle in which we are engaged, with the utmost vigour. I have accordingly taken the earliest opportunity which was afforded me, of laying before you the expenses of the present year, and the means and aids by which they are to be supplied : but before I proceed to this enumeration, I must first mention the leading object which has governed my mind upon this occasion, namely, the recollection of the unanimous opinion, with respect to the present struggle, which the house have carried to the throne, and published to the world ;—that they regarded it as a struggle for whatever was most dear and sacred, for the security of the throne, and the preservation of the constitution ; and that they were prepared to prosecute it with the greatest exertion, and a zeal propor-



tioned to the importance of the objects of contest. Fortified with these considerations, I am prepared for that task which my duty on the present occasion requires me to undertake. What, in the first place, is to be looked to, is the vigorous and effectual prosecution of this war, in which we have every thing at stake; and it is by such a prosecution of the war, that we shall best consult true prudence and rational economy. I do not wish to conceal from the house, and from the public, that large preparations must be made, and considerable expenses incurred. Economy to me seems in our present situation to consist, not in limiting the extent of these expenses, but, in controlling their application. In this point of view, I rely upon this house for a liberal supply, adequate to the exigency and importance of the crisis.—There is another point which I wish to inculcate; that whatever degree of exertion we may regard as necessary, or may be disposed to make, the public ought not in any respect to be deluded and flattered—they ought to be made sensible of the full extent to which they may be liable to be called upon to defray the expenses of the war. I will omit nothing on my part to bring forward annually the whole accounts. But, though in calculating the expenses of a war, much may be done by estimate, a great deal must still depend on contingency. Unforeseen occurrences will continually arise, which will render additional expenses necessary. Taking then these occurrences into view, it is proper to allow considerable latitude for the expenses that may be incurred. It is part of my plan to allow a considerable sum for these extraordinary emergencies, so as to make a full provision for every part of the expense.

But there is another object to be attended to. Whatever degree of exertion may be made in the present contest, which involves the dearest and most sacred objects, still we must not allow ourselves to neglect what likewise involves in it the permanent interests of ourselves and our posterity. I not only mean still to employ the annual million for the reduction of the national debt, but likewise the sum of 200,000*l.* which was last year understood to be set apart for that purpose, so as to provide,

even during the continuance of the war, for the lessening of the debt by compound interest. I likewise mean to avoid another evil which has taken place in all former wars—the accumulation of an unfunded debt. I therefore intend to bring the unfunded debt every year to a distinct account. In conformity with this principle, I shall propose the payment of the navy debt, in order to reduce it to the establishment mentioned by the committee in their report last year.

I shall now proceed in the usual way to state, first, the total amount of the supply, and the total amount of the ways and means, distinguishing the excesses of the services, and of the resources.

## NAVY.

25,000 Seamen, including

Marines, . . . . £. 1,300,000 0 0

20,000 ditto, . . . . 1,040,000 0 0

Ordinary, 669,205 5 10

Extraordi-

nary, . 387,710 0 0

—————1,056,915 5 10

Excess of Navy Debt be-  
yond the Estimate of the

Committee, . . . . 575,000 0 0

—————3,971,915 5 10

## ARMY.

Army, . . . . . £. 2,573,187 18 0

Hanoverians, . . . . . 455,851 14 8

Militia . . . . . 939,519 15 7

—————3,968,559 8 3

## ORDNANCE.

Ordinary, }  
Extraordi- } 502,686 13 5  
naries, }

Additional

Estimate, 281,079 18 8

—————783,766 12 1



Cobb. at Lyme . . . . .	9,802	4	0		
				793,568	16 1

£. 8,734,043 10 2

Miscellaneous Services, . . . . .	175,844	11	2½		
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DEFICIENCY OF GRANTS.

Arising from Interest on Exchequer Bills, }					
Lottery, . . . . . }	222,325	2	4		
Deficiency of Ways and Means . . . }					
Deficiency of Land and Malt, . . . .	350,000	0	0		
To be made annually to the Sinking Fund, . . . .	200,000	0	0		

With regard to the first article, the total amount of the expense of the navy, for which there have been already voted 45,000 seamen, I would by no means have it understood that these are the whole number which may be necessary to be employed. These sums however constitute the whole of the supply in the ordinary mode of the estimate ; to which is to be added, such a sum as the committee may think proper to allow for the latitude of unforeseen and unavoidable expense. I have before mentioned the extraordinary charges which may be expected to occur. I have just now stated the possibility of some exceeding with regard to seamen. If the situation of this country lead us, as I hope it will, to take an efficient part along with our numerous allies, in carrying on offensive operations against the enemy, a considerable increase of expense in our military establishment will be necessary. Hitherto, we have hired none but the Hanoverian troops ; but, in this case, we may have occasion to employ a considerable body of other foreign troops, in order to press on all sides the common enemy. Some additional expense will be incurred by domestic encampments. An increase will also accrue in the sum allowed to the loyalists, some of whom have been sent to Canada. A loss may perhaps accrue in the lottery, on account of certain regulations which it has been found necessary to make. It is, therefore, my opinion, that a considerable sum should be set apart to enable his Majesty to



provide for the unexpected occurrences of a war, and defray its exigencies as they arise. So many are the contingencies of a war, that, whatever sum may be voted for this purpose, I will not pledge myself for its sufficiency. In other wars, let it be recollected, that, after the sums allotted for them had been expended, very considerable debts were brought forward to be defrayed at a future period. After endeavouring to take every thing into the account, and to calculate as exactly as I can, I will not pretend to state the precise sum; but I would not propose less than that a million and a half should be given to his Majesty with a view to contingencies. The mode of giving it, I would suggest to be by exchequer bills upon a vote of credit; but as I do not wish the number of exchequer bills in circulation to be increased, I would likewise propose to pay off a million and a half of those which are now in circulation. The total of these sums amount to 11,182,213*l.* 3*s.* 8½*d.*

I now come to state the means with which we are furnished, and to suggest the aids which may yet be wanting to defray this expense.

Land Tax, . . . . .	£. 200,000
Malt . . . . .	750,000
Surplus of Consolidated Fund on 5th Jan. 1793 . . . . .	435,696
Surplus of Consolidated Fund on April 5, 1794, viz. Expected Surplus on 5th April, 1793, £. 274,000 Expected Surplus of the 4 Quarters to 5th April, 1794, estimated on the 4 years average as below, after deducting 220,000 <i>l.</i> for Duties to be appropriated to pay the Interest of Money to be borrowed . . . . .	* 2,185,000

\* Year ending January  
1790, Total Amount of

Tax . . . . . £. 15,991,000  
Deduct Land and Malt . . . 2,558,000

————— 13,433,000

Imprest Monies to be repaid . . . . . 250,000

Money to be paid by the E. India Comp. 500,000

3,209,000

Money from the Commissioners for the National

1791, Total Amount of Taxes 16,437,000

Deduct Land and Malt 2,558,000

13,879,000

1792, Total Amount of Taxes 16,730,000

Deduct Land and Malt 2,558,000

14,172,000

1793, Total Amount of Taxes\* 16,970,000

Deduct Land and Malt 2,558,000

14,412,000

£. 55,896,000

Deduct on account of repeal-

ed Taxes in three years . . . 669,000

Ditto in 1792-3 . . . . . 90,000

759,000

£. 55,137,000

Average, £. 13,784,000

Add 1-6th of a 53d Week . . . . . 32,000

£. 13,816,000

Deduct, permanent Charges on Con-

solidated Fund . . . . . 11,391,000

And for Interest on Money to be raised . . . 240,000

11,631,000

£. 2,185,000

\* Total Amount of Taxes . . . . . 15,116,000

Land and Malt . . . . . 2,558,000

£. 17,674,000

Deduct, Total Amount of New

Taxes in 1793 . . . . . 332,760

From which is to be abated Old

Stamp Duties . . . . . 128,600

704,000

16,970,000

Debt, including the annual Contribution of	
200,000 <i>l.</i> . . . . .	*1,650,000
Continuation of temporary Taxes . . . . .	255,000
	<hr/>
	£. 8,299,696
	<hr/>

That part of the statement, which relates to the surplus of the consolidated fund, on the 5th of January last, I trust will afford much satisfaction. Gentlemen will recollect that the expenses of 1792 were to be defrayed by the amount of the revenue to the 5th of April 1793; but it happens that the expenses were not only defrayed on the 5th of January 1793, but a surplus actually remained; consequently the produce of the quarter ending on the 5th of April, is applicable to the exigencies of the present year; of the produce of this quarter, 435,000*l.* have been already voted. Supposing it to be as favourable as it has been in former years, 274,000*l.* will remain of this quarter, in addition to the 435,000*l.* of which the nation will have to avail itself. Still, however, I mean to carry on the year from the 5th April 1793, to the 5th of April 1794. However sanguine in my own expectations of the flourishing state of the revenue, I have always wished to be moderate in my calculations; I have therefore, upon former occasions, as at present, taken it upon the average of the four last years. It is my intention to continue those temporary taxes which were imposed upon occasion of the Spanish armament, and which expire at different periods. They had been found to be attended with no particular inconvenience to the country, and would consequently be submitted to with less reluctance than any fresh imposts. These amount to 255,000*l.* which sum I should henceforth propose to consider as part of the supply.

\* Monies to be received by the Commissioners for Reduction of the National Debt in the Four Quarters to 5th January 1794.

Quarter ending 5th April 1793	£. 583,195	
5th July 1793	361,489	
10th October 1793	349,195	
5th Jan. 1794	375,703	
	<hr/>	£. 1,650,000



The aid which I have now to suggest is, what often has been looked upon as entirely chimerical, and has been treated, at best, as precarious and uncertain; namely, the assistance to the finances of this country to be derived from those of India. This assistance my right honourable friend \* pledged himself for, when he could neither foresee the war which threatened the opulence of India, nor the present war which could render its resources desirable to this country. I am now happy to state that the fulfilment of his promise has arrived, notwithstanding the difficulties which seemed to bar its accomplishment; and that, in 1794, a sum of not less than 500,000*l.* from the finances of India, will be applicable to the expenses of this country. My right honourable friend has not only stated his propositions on this subject distinctly, article by article, but published them to the world; and thus taken every method to invite discussion, and challenge contradiction. The political and commercial arrangements of India are not yet before the house; nor has any plan, with respect to them, been definitively settled: but, whatever may be the plan adopted, I trust it will be one attended with no less advantage than proposed by my right honourable friend; so that, in any case, I may with confidence, promise the benefit which it has been stated will result from the assistance of India. The whole make a total of 6,649,000*l.* so that there remains 4,500,000*l.* to be provided for by other resources. Of this sum, there is 1,650,000*l.* in the hands of the commissioners of the national debt, which they would readily subscribe; and for the rest there will be wanting a loan of 2,900,000*l.*

I have not made any proposals concerning the terms of the loan, because I considered it, first, as my duty to submit this statement to the public, in order to avoid any thing which might have the appearance of deception. A sum of 240,000*l.* will be wanting to pay the interest of this loan; for which purpose I mean to devote the taxes imposed upon occasion of the Spanish armament. These taxes were of two kinds, some of

\* Mr. Dundas.

them temporary, and others perpetual. Of these, the additional tax on bills, and the game duty, amounted to 85,000*l*. The tax of one penny per gallon on all British spirits, which surely was, in itself, a matter of proper regulation, produced a sum of 112,000*l*. Another of these was the addition of ten per cent. upon all assessed taxes, which amounted to about 90,000*l*.; making, upon the whole, a sum of 287,000*l*. According to the present price of stocks, and recent events are not likely to diminish their value, I will now lay before the committee a general statement of the whole subject, in one connected point of view:

## GENERAL STATEMENT.

Amount of Supply	£. 11,182,213	
Do. of Ways and Means	8,299,696	
	<hr/>	2,882,517
Add, Money from Commissioners	1,650,000	
	<hr/>	
		£. 4,532,517 say, 4,500,000
		<hr/>
4,500,000 <i>l</i> . at 75 per cent. is equal to	. . .	£. 6,000,000
		<hr/>
6,000,000 <i>l</i> . at 3 per cent. is equal to	. . .	£. 180,000
To which add an additional 1 per cent.	. . .	60,000
		<hr/>
		£. 240,000
		<hr/>
10 per cent. on Assessed Taxes,	. . . £. 90,000	} Temporary Taxes to be continued.
British Spirits . . . . .	112,000	
Bills and Receipts . . . . .	68,000	
Game Duty, . . . . .	17,000	
	<hr/>	
		£. 287,000
		<hr/>

This, I believe, is nearly the statement which I meant to submit to the committee. You will have perceived that I have stated a large and ample provision, in point of expense, with a



view to an extended scale of operations. You will also perceive that I have made a large provision for the extraordinary and unforeseen occurrences which may arise during the war ; while, at the same time, I have attended to the object of keeping down the unfunded debt, and applying the annual surplus to the extinction of the funded debt. The committee will at least see that I have not neglected, however painful, to do my duty ; that I have prepared, decidedly, to meet events, and to let them know the extent of the operations with which the present and future state of the war may be attended : and though I should deem it presumptuous to speculate much about the events of a war which must always be accompanied with some degree of suspense and uncertainty, I do not think it useless to suggest some observations with respect to the war in which we are engaged. The excess of the permanent revenue, if kept up, is no less than 900,000*l.* above the peace establishment ; which even, if destroyed by war, will leave the country in possession of all its ordinary revenue. This 900,000*l.* I have not taken into my reasoning. I have taken care not to found any calculation upon it ; because I was desirous to leave it as a security against those accidents and contingencies to which every war is liable. Nothing, certainly, is so difficult, as to calculate, with any degree of certainty, upon the events of a war ; yet, if the same good fortune which has attended us in the outset, shall continue to accompany us, we have every thing to hope, and little reason to dread that our commerce will meet with much interruption ; in which case, our revenue could not suffer. At the same time, it has been my object to prepare you for sinister events, and to make provision against every calamity that can possibly occur. The committee will see, from the statements which I have submitted to them, that even if the struggle in which we are engaged should last beyond the present year, we shall be able to carry it on during the next, without any additional burthen. I am not desirous to draw a sanguine picture. I was careful to state none of these encouragements to a war in any of the previous discussions. I considered that we ought then to determine



solely on the merits of the case; and that, if we considered a war as necessary, we were bound to meet it, even to its utmost extent. There is no part which we ought not to be prepared to sacrifice for the preservation of the whole. This is a war in which, not merely adopting empty professions, but speaking the language of our hearts, and fulfilling the impressions of our duty, we are ready to sacrifice our lives and fortunes for the safety of the country, the security of Europe, and in the cause of justice, humanity, and religion. I will not do such injustice to any one as to suppose, that, in such a cause, they are not ready to go the greatest length, and to make every sacrifice that may be required. I will here barely touch upon the contrast which the present situation of the country offers to the flourishing state during the last session with regard to revenue. That contrast no man feels more severely than I do. No man can more deeply regret any interruption to the prosperous state of the revenue, the object of my most anxious attention and my most favourite wishes; but if they consider the situation of the neighbouring and hostile state with respect to revenue, they have no reason to despond. Instead of giving way to feelings of useless regret upon that occasion, I trust you are influenced by far different sentiments.

Many are the motives which have induced us to enter into the war.—I have heard of wars of honour; and such, too, have been deemed wars of prudence and policy. On the present occasion, whatever can raise the feelings, or animate the exertions of a people, concur to prompt us to the contest. The contempt which the French have shewn for a neutrality, on our part most strictly observed; the violations of their solemn and plighted faith; their presumptuous attempts to interfere in the government of this country, and to arm our subjects against ourselves; to vilify a monarch, the object of our gratitude, reverence, and affection; and to separate the court from the people, by representing them as influenced by different motives, and acting from different interests—After provocations so wanton, so often repeated, and so highly aggravated, does not this be-

come, on our part, a war of honour; a war necessary to assert the spirit of the nation, and the dignity of the British name! I have heard of wars undertaken for the general security of Europe; was it ever so threatened as by the progress of the French arms, and the system of ambition and aggrandizement which they have discovered? I have heard of wars for the defence of the Protestant religion: our enemies in this instance, are equally the enemies of all religion—of Lutheranism, of Calvinism; and desirous to propagate, every where, by the force of their arms, that system of infidelity which they avow in their principles. I have heard of wars undertaken in defence of the lawful succession; but now we fight in defence of our hereditary monarchy. We are at war with those who would destroy the whole fabric of our constitution. When I look at these things, they afford me encouragement and consolation; and support me in discharging the painful task, to which I am now called by my duty. The retrospect to that flourishing state in which we were placed previous to this war, ought to teach us to know the value of the present order of things; and to resist the malignant and envious attempts of those who would deprive us of that happiness which they despair themselves to attain. We ought to remember, that that very prosperous situation at the present crisis supplies us with the exertions, and furnishes us with the means, which our exigencies demand. In such a cause as that in which we are now engaged, I trust that our exertions will terminate only with our lives. On this ground I have brought forward the resolutions which I am now to propose; and on this ground, I now trust for your support.

The several resolutions were afterwards put and agreed to.

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*May 7, 1793.*

On a motion by Mr. Grey, for referring to a committee various petitions that had been presented to the House, praying for a Reform in the representation of the people in Parliament,

MR. PITT spoke to the following effect :

I am anxious to deliver my opinion before, from the lateness of the hour, and the length to which the discussion has been carried, the attention of the house shall be exhausted. I feel more particularly desirous, on account of the share which I have had in agitating the question of a parliamentary reform, to state fully and distinctly the reasons which induce me to resist the motion which is now brought forward. The question at the present time involves the fate of all those who have hitherto been so long protected by the British constitution; nay, it involves the fundamental principles of every society and form of government. But first I shall beg leave to remind the house of the grounds upon which I opposed the notice of a parliamentary reform, when brought forward last session. The opinion, which I then entertained, is confirmed by what has since occurred, and has even received strength from the petition now on the table, and the motion before the house. I then considered the agitation of the question as capable of producing much mischief, and likely to be attended with no good. Such was the conclusion which I formed from experience. I had myself, on different occasions, proposed a reform, in situations which seemed favourable to my object, and supported by persons of the highest respectability, and had even then failed. Several gentlemen, from a dread of the consequences of innovation, and from a doubt whether the advantage to be obtained was such as would compensate for the risk incurred, opposed my views. If such arguments had formerly succeeded, how much force had they last year acquired from the dreadful lesson afforded in the example of a neighbouring kingdom! The scene of horrors which it then presented, exceeded imagination, far short, as it stopped, of what has since occurred. I perceived forming within the bosom of the country a small, but not contemptible, party, who aspired at something more than a moderate reform, whose object indeed was nothing less than to introduce here those French principles which, from their consequences, I could not regard but with horror. I saw therefore, that while none of that good of which a



moderate reform might be productive was to be obtained, much danger might be incurred, and an opening afforded to wicked persons to subvert that very constitution which we were desirous to improve, only in order that we might preserve: or, though the attempt to reform might not be attended with the total subversion of the constitution, yet it might lead to a state of confusion and distraction, which at least would disturb the enjoyment of those blessings of which we were in possession. I thus found the probability of good but little, while the mischief was of a size so gigantic as to exceed calculation. And upon this reasoning, even if I had rated as high as ever the advantages of a reform, and had seen a greater probability than had hitherto appeared of accomplishing such a reform, I would rather have abandoned my object than have incurred or increased the danger. I would rather forego for ever the advantages of reform, than risk for a moment the existence of the British constitution. Besides, I considered the necessity for a reform, in consequence of circumstances which had since occurred, to be considerably less than when I had brought forward my original motion. But how then was the question argued on the other side? The danger which I stated was not denied. But it was alleged that this was precisely the time to bring forward a moderate reform, as the best means to quiet violent spirits, and the surest remedy against ruinous innovation. The gentlemen who now come forward in the cause of parliamentary reform, I have no doubt, were encouraged in their first exertions by the hope that they should be enabled to overawe the violent spirits, and that moderate men, who might otherwise have been misled, would be induced to join their standard. I have learned from their publications, that they not only proposed to guide the minds of the people, but also to be guided by them, and that they were resolved to drop their views, if they should find that they did not meet with a pretty general concurrence. Such was the situation of the business at the last session. I will now enquire what has passed since. And here I shall enter, along with the noble lord \*, into the protest

\* Lord Mornington.

against not being allowed to introduce the subject of the affairs of France, which I consider as intimately, essentially, and inseparably connected with the present question.

Another year has now passed in that country, disgraced with excesses and outrages so horrid, that they efface the memory of those which formerly occurred, and leave of them only the faint traces, and the image hardly visible. The conduct of the French, in all its circumstances, bore a peculiar application to this country: it presented the fruits opening, in due season, the legitimate offspring of those trees, under the specious pretext of liberty, planted against this country and its allies. The French had disclosed a system of disseminating their principles, and procuring proselytes in every part of Europe,—a system which they had particularly followed up with respect to this country. Such was the case without—what was the situation of affairs within? Societies had been formed in this country, affiliated with the jacobin clubs in France; and though they had since assumed a different shape, were then employed for the purpose of spreading jacobin principles. In this object they proceeded with a degree of boldness and confidence, proportioned to the success of the French arms. We thus beheld the scheme which we had anticipated as the result of the new constitutions in France, opening upon us. We had more immediately an opportunity of seeing what were the views of the legislators in France with respect to this country, and what their instruments in England were endeavouring to effect. For while in France they always mentioned the pretext of a parliamentary reform, as the medium by which they were to introduce their principles, their instruments here always took care to connect the system of parliamentary reform with all those delusive doctrines, upon which was founded the newly-raised fabric of French freedom—Nothing less than a national convention was held out as a sufficient remedy for the abuses which prevailed in the representation, and the sole organ through which a more perfect form of government was to be obtained; namely, such a government as should acknowledge no other source of autho-

city and no other rule of conduct, than the will of the majority. In short, French principles were inculcated as the true standard of political belief, and the example of the French government proposed as a worthy object of imitation.

I now proceed to events of a more recent date. The spirit of disaffection which had been thus raised was happily kept under, and prevented from breaking out into action by the seasonable interference of the legislature, by the vigilance and exertions of the executive power, by the loyalty, vigour, and unanimity of the people, and likewise by the interposition of Providence, in the turn lately given to affairs on the continent, and the check experienced by the French arms. The admirers and supporters of French policy in this country felt a depression of spirits from the defeat of their friends and allies, which for a time gave a fatal blow to their hopes, and compelled them to conceal their views, and to assume a veil of caution but ill suited to the ardour of their temper, and the boldness of their enterprize. But though they had thus been forced for a while to relinquish their schemes, it was not to be presumed from this that they had by any means abandoned them—No; they still indulged the same hopes, they still meditated the same plans, and only lay by to watch for an opportunity favourable to the accomplishment of their designs. For that purpose, they had looked peculiarly to the question of parliamentary reform. Previous to the bringing forward of the present motion, a great number of petitions had been presented to the house, equally singular in their form, expression, and the manner in which they had thus been submitted to notice. They had been introduced under the auspices of the gentlemen who supported the motion. They were all of three descriptions, except that one upon which the motion was more particularly founded, and a petition from Nottingham, conceived in exactly the same terms with one which had been received from that place in 1782. When it had first been received, it came after a long war, which had harassed and exhausted the country, and the calamities of which it stated as a proper ground for a reform of parliament: unfortunately, it still



employed the same language, and gave the same description of the country, after a long and prosperous peace. All these petitions came either from England or from Scotland, or from places in England and Scotland, that seemed to have no natural connection or likelihood of communication. Yet coming from these different places, they were all the same in substance and nearly the same in style; whatever little difference there might be in the expression, they seemed all to proceed from the same hands—

*Facies non omnibus una,*

*Nec diversa tamen : qualem decet esse sororum.*

They all, it must be confessed, betrayed a strong family likeness. Almost the only difference was, that those from Scotland expressed their surprize at the immense load of debt, notwithstanding the extent of the taxes, which they stated at twenty millions,—four millions above the truth. All of them were the same in prayer; they concurred in praying for the right of universal suffrage, as the basis of that reform which they desired.

With respect to these petitions, two questions arise; first, what weight they ought to have with the house, and how far they ought to be allowed to go in influencing their judgment; and secondly, whether this is a season proper for the consideration of that object which they claim, and favourable to a temperate reform? On the first point, when petitions came to the house, fabricated in appearance, similar in substance and expression, it did not require much time to determine in what point of view they were to be considered. There was every reason to suspect that they were the work of a few individuals. They had certainly much more the appearance of the design of a few individuals, than of the general expression of the sentiments of the country. If it were asked, then, what weight they ought to have? the answer is easy. None. What weight ought to belong to petitions coming to this house in those circumstances, carrying every appearance of concert and system,

combined in the same prayer, and expressed nearly in the same language? The fraud is too gross and palpable, and it is evident from what quarter they come, and with what views they are presented. All the circumstances in France and this country point out the present as a season unfavourable to a temperate reform. The gentlemen who support the motion have been engaged in a society for the purpose, as they themselves state, of allaying the violence of those who might be misled by a blind rage of innovation, and enlightening the people with respect to the nature of their true claims. Such had been the objects which they had held out at their commencement; they had proposed to make a fair experiment, to allow the people of England a full opportunity of procuring a rational and moderate reform; and if they should find that they could not succeed, and that the people should be disinclined to any plan of reform, and not disposed to prosecute the measures which they should recommend, they were then to abandon their purpose. They had now gone on for upwards of a twelvemonth, publishing to enlighten the people, and using every means to promote their own influence, and during all that time they had not been able to make a convert of one man in England.—They had been obliged at last to come forward with a petition of their own, introduced to the house on the very day that the debate was to take place. The other petitions which united in the same object of demanding parliamentary reform carried a suspicious and dangerous appearance. Ought they not then, consistently with those principles which they had avowed in the outset, to have come forward upon this occasion, to have acknowledged their mistake, and their conviction that the people of England were not desirous of a reform, to have given up their object in which they found they could not succeed, and to have joined with us in opposing a reform which is not even desired, and which could not be granted with any propriety in the present moment, or even with the chance of advantage to those for whom it is demanded?

But what are the grounds upon which they now bring forward



this question of reform? First, they state, that from the general burst of loyalty expressed by the nation upon the first alarm, there is no reason to fear that the people will pass beyond the bounds of discretion, and that no season can be more favourable for a temperate reform than that in which they have so strongly testified their attachment to the established order of things, and their reluctance to any change. Of this temper they recommend to us to take the advantage. But how stands the case? The fact, I grant, is indeed true. But it is also true, that societies in this country have been anxiously seeking not to obtain reform, but to find cause of dissatisfaction; not to allay the violence of innovation, but to inflame discontent. Is it then out of deference to that small party, actuated by such principles, and pursuing such a line of conduct, that we are to grant a reform; and not out of respect to the great body of the people of England, animated by a spirit of the purest loyalty, and too much attached to the blessings of the constitution and the present government to wish to hazard them by a change? What then is the question at issue? It is the same question which is now at issue with the whole of Europe, who are contending for the cause of order, of justice, of humanity, of religion, in opposition to anarchy, to injustice, to cruelty, to infidelity. I am sensible that ninety-nine out of a hundred of the people of England are warm in those sentiments, are sensible of the security which they enjoy for these blessings from the frame of our excellent constitution; and, so far from wishing to touch it with an innovating hand, are prepared to defend it against every attack. Are we to yield then to the clamours of dissatisfaction and discontent; and are we to disregard the voice of satisfaction and gratitude? Are we, in order to gratify the caprice, or sooth the insolence, of a few disaffected, to neglect the benefit of the common body? Are we, at a moment of emergency like this, when the great cause of all is at stake, to suspend our cares for the public welfare, and attend to the discussion of petty claims and the redress of imaginary grievances? Are we, at such a moment, in order to please a



few individuals, to hazard the consequence of producing alarm and distrust in the general body, firm and united in the common cause? This would indeed resemble the conduct of those who, at the moment that their citadel was besieged, should proceed to the discussion of points of difference, rather than attend to providing the means of defence.

The next ground alleged for bringing forward the motion for reform at present was, that this was a time of war, and that, from the situation of commercial credit, the country was in a state of alarm and distrust. These certainly were very strange reasons for such a measure. If we are engaged in a war for the purpose of defending ourselves against a foreign enemy, is this a reason why we should hazard the consequences of any distraction at home? This, instead of diminishing, would be the most effectual method to add to the evil. Of the state of credit I shall say nothing, though the reasoning, as applied to it, stands in the same predicament; certain it is, that considerable embarrassment has lately taken place, a circumstance at all times very apt to result from an extensive commerce. The legislature, much to their honour, have stepped forward, and made an exertion for the aid of the merchants, which, as it is extraordinary, I hope it will be successful: but can this embarrassment be ascribed to the constitution, except by making the constitution the cause of that extent to which commerce has been carried? Can this period and this state of affairs, however, be brought forward as grounds for reform by gentlemen who last year stated on the same occasion the duration of a long peace, and the high state of public prosperity, as their motives for calling the attention of the house to that subject? These are certainly novelties which require to be reconciled before the gentlemen can make any pretensions to consistency of reasoning.

I shall next proceed to remark on the precise nature of the motion itself. The motion is, to refer to a committee one of those petitions for a reform which have been presented to the house. Whether the honourable gentleman who made the mo-

tion means likewise to refer them all, is a point of which I am not ascertained. [Mr. Grey here nodded assent.] If he means to refer them all, my reasoning on the subject is reduced to a very short compass. Ought we to refer to a committee to deliberate on the measure of unlimited suffrage? The circumstance of having moved to refer the prayers of the petitions, without having pointed out any specific plan for obtaining their object, clearly renders it improper to go into any discussion on the subject. This circumstance has a tendency to excite discontent, without affording the means of allaying it. Though I formerly moved for a general inquiry, I was afterwards convinced, that it would be attended with no good effect, and I abandoned the motion. I became sensible that there was no chance of obtaining any advantage, but by bringing forward a specific proposition. If I thought so then, how much more must I now be confirmed in the same opinion! If any object is proposed for discussion, it ought to be a specific object. The contrary mode can tend only to perplex the discussion, and to render it productive of mischief.

I shall now shortly observe on the manner of introducing this business. The honourable gentleman stated fairly and candidly, that he brought forward the present question, not on the ground of right, but of expediency. I think so too. To talk of an abstracted right of equal representation, is absurd. It is to arrogate that right to one form of government, whereas Providence has accommodated the different forms of government to the different states of society in which they subsist. There are as many different rights as the causes which occur to diversify the modes of government. There is one right for a Roman, another for an Athenian, and a third for a Lacedemonian; but though the honourable gentleman disclaimed the ground of general and abstracted right, he has so far enlarged his ground of expedience as to embrace the mode of reasoning, by which that wild theory is supported. He has declared himself ready to take even universal suffrage,—that mode which he approves the least, rather than to suffer the constitution to remain as it is,

I so far differ with him, that I would rather abandon what I conceive to be the best plan of reform, than risk the consequences of any hazard to the constitution, as it at present subsists. Can I then embark in the same committee with the honourable gentleman, while he rejects the only plan on which I have contended for reform, and is ready to give into that which he himself deems the worst? I must confess myself alarmed at the extent to which he carries his object; and I cannot help looking at the society with some degree of suspicion, in consequence of a letter which I find signed with his own name. This letter is addressed to the people of Sheffield. These people have so well benefited by those lessons of caution and moderation which they received from their patrons, the friends of the people, that they lately addressed to the house a petition for parliamentary reform, conceived in such terms as rendered it improper to be received. They early communicated to the friends of the people their plan for a parliamentary reform, by assembling a convention of national delegates. The answer to this is nearly expressed in the following words:—"On the plan which you have suggested we do not think it yet a fit time to deliberate. In a more advanced stage it may become a proper subject of discussion." The honourable gentleman, in his ideas of reform, proceeds upon grounds directly opposite to mine, not indeed less hostile to my views than they are to the present form of the constitution. Upon the whole, from the method which he proposes, I see no probability of a temperate reform, and, if granted, it would not even answer the end for which it is demanded. So far from satisfying those who now solicit it, it would only extend their views, and multiply and encourage their claims; they want not a parliamentary reform for itself, but for something else, in which they have a prospect. They consider it not as the end of their wishes, but only as means which may lead to their accomplishment.

But here we are told, that by refusing this reform, we are acting upon the same principle by which we lost America, by not complying with the demands of that country. The Ameri-



cans desired specific relief; they pointed out a definite object with which they pledged themselves to be satisfied. It was refused to them, because it was said, that it would only encourage them to ask for more. I do not now mean to enter on the propriety of this refusal, or a discussion of the means by which America was lost; but I cannot help remarking that there is a wide difference between the two cases. Here no specific relief is demanded, no definite object is pointed out. You are desired to give, what nobody asks; and to those who tell you, that even if you give it them, they will not be satisfied. It has been asked, who were the *they* so often alluded to in the course of the debate. The answer was short. They were those who have signed the petitions. They claim that which can be resolved into nothing but a deduction of French principles: that which is termed the will of the majority, the will of the multitude. The motion requires you to be prepared to deliberate whether it is right or not, to give individual suffrage. On this question, I am not prepared to deliberate; first, because it wants no deliberation, and secondly, because I have deliberated upon it long enough already. I have not been so inattentive to what has now passed in a neighbouring kingdom, nor have I been so unaffected by the transactions which have there occurred, as not frequently to have taken this subject into consideration.

I shall now give my reasons, why I am not prepared to deliberate on the question: and first, because my plan went to give vigour and stability to the ancient principles of the constitution, and not to introduce into it any new principles. The merit of the British constitution is to be estimated, not by metaphysical ideas, not by vague theories, but by analysing it in practice. Its benefits are confirmed by the sure and infallible test of experience. It is on this ground, that the representation of the people, which must always be deemed a most valuable part of the constitution, rests on its present footing. In the history of this country, from the earliest period down to that in which I now speak, the number of electors have always been few in proportion to that of the great body of the people. My

plan went to regulate the distribution of the right of electing members, to add some, and to transfer others : when such was my plan, am I to be told, that I have been an advocate for parliamentary reform, as if I had espoused the same side of the question which is now taken up by these honourable gentlemen, and were now resisting that cause which I had formerly supported ? I affirm, that my plan is as contrary to that of the honourable gentleman, as his is to the constitution : nay, I go farther ; I agree with the honourable gentleman \* that to adopt the system now proposed, is to adopt the principles of the French code, and follow the example of their legislators. As these principles are unknown in the history of this country, it is to France only that we can look for their origin. The same principle which claims individual suffrage, and affirms that every man has an equal right to a share in the representation, is that which serves as the basis of that declaration of rights on which the French legislators have founded their government. We ought to recollect that there are 250 persons who possess an equal voice in the legislature with that of this house ; that there is a king, who, to the third of the legislative, adds the whole of the executive power ; and if this principle of individual suffrage be granted, and be carried to its utmost extent, it goes to subvert the peerage, to depose the king, and, in fine, to extinguish every hereditary distinction, and every privileged order, and to establish that system of equalising anarchy announced in the code of French legislation, and attested in the blood of the massacres at Paris,

The question then is, whether you will abide by your constitution, or hazard a change, with all that dreadful train of consequences with which we have seen it attended in a neighbouring kingdom ? Abide by your constitution, did I say ? It cannot be necessary for me to add a word more. But I would not stop there if it were possible to go farther. If it were possible for an Englishman to forget his attachment to the constitution and his loyalty to the sovereign—if it were possible for him

\* Mr. Windham.

to lose all those generous feelings which bind him to his country and secure his obedience to its laws—if it were possible for him to sacrifice all these to those principles which are brought forward to support a change of government ; yet, if he should attend only to reason, he would find them wild and illusive theories. He would find the principle of individual will powerful and efficient to the destruction of every individual and of every community ; but to every good purpose null and void. He would find that those rights which entitle all to an equal share in the government, are rights which only serve to remove them from useful labour, from sober industry, and from domestic connections, and which abandon them to be the slaves of every idle caprice, and of every destructive passion. The government that adopts such principles, ceases to be a government ; it unties the bands which knit together society ; it forfeits the reverence and obedience of its subjects ; it gives up those, whom it ought to protect, to the daggers of the Marseillaise, and the assassins of Paris. Under a pretence of centering all authority in the will of the many, it establishes the worst sort of despotism. Such is the state of that wretched country, France, the detestable policy of which has added new words to the dictionary, such as the phrases of municipalities declaring themselves in a state of *permanent* revolution, and the nation itself in a state of *sovereign* insurrection ! In what is called the government of the multitude, they are not the many who govern the few, but the few who govern the many. It is a species of tyranny, which adds insult to the wretchedness of its subjects, by styling its own arbitrary decrees the voice of the people, and sanctioning its acts of oppression and cruelty under the pretence of the national will. Such is the nature of those principles connected with the right of individual suffrage ; and how far you are prepared to give countenance to that measure, by referring it to a committee as a subject of deliberation, you are now called to determine.

The motion was rejected,

Ayes ..... 41

Noes ..... 242



*June 17, 1793.*

Mr. Fox having moved an address to his Majesty, requesting him to take the earliest measures for procuring Peace with France on terms consistent with the justice and policy of the British nation,

Mr. PITT rose to deliver his sentiments in opposition to the motion :

After what has been already so ably urged, I do not, in the present stage of the debate, conceive it necessary to speak to the merits of the question. The almost unanimous call of the house shews, that on that point they have already sufficiently made up their minds. But something has been alleged on the general grounds on which the motion is brought forward, and particular allusions have been made to me, which I cannot allow to pass over in silence. The motion has been introduced by the honourable gentleman on the eve of the conclusion of the session, no doubt as a solemn expression of the sentiments entertained by him on the present state of affairs, and I should be sorry that my opinion on the present occasion should be at all equivocal. I do not then hesitate to declare that this motion is in itself the most impolitic and preposterous which could possibly be adopted, the most contradictory to those general principles which at all times ought to regulate our conduct, and the most unsuitable to those particular circumstances in which we are now placed. Such is my opinion of the nature of this motion, which points out to us a line of conduct we can by no means pursue, namely, to make peace upon terms which even, if within our reach, we ought not to accept, but which, in fact, is only calculated to amuse and delude the people, by holding out to them a possibility of peace, when, in reality, peace is impossible, and thus serving to create groundless discontents and dissatisfaction with the present situation of affairs.

Are we, I would ask, in pursuance of this motion, to be content merely with the French relinquishing those conquests which they have unjustly made, without either obtaining reparations for the injuries they have already done us, or security against their future repetition? There might, indeed, be situa-

tions in which we might be compelled to adopt such a conduct. Against necessity there is no possibility of contending. But, indeed, it would be rather strange if we should do that at the beginning of a most successful war, which could only be advisable at the conclusion of a most disastrous one. It would be a principle rather somewhat new, if, when unjustly attacked, and forced into a war, we should think proper to cease from all hostilities, as soon as the enemy should be unwilling to support their attack, and go on with the contest. Has such been the case in any of the most favourite periods of the history of this country, to which the honourable gentleman is so fond of alluding? Where can he find any such principle in any of those wars which this country has carried on in support of its independence? And if so, what is there in the peculiar situation of the French, the disturbers of the peace of Europe, and the unprovoked aggressors of this country, that should require any other measure to be dealt to them, than what we have been accustomed on former occasions to afford to our enemies? With a prospect of success so great as we have in the present moment, are we to grant them an impunity for all those designs which they have so unjustly formed and attempted to carry into execution? Would this tend in any degree to remedy the temporary inconvenience to this country, which the honourable gentleman has stated as resulting from the war, but which, in reality, is produced by collateral causes? In no case would the conduct here pointed out be expedient. But of all cases, where we ought not to stop merely because the enemy stops, is that where we have suffered an injury without having either obtained reparation or security.

This I will illustrate by what is at present our situation. And first I will ask, what was the state of this country with respect to France, previous to the declaration of war on her part? We then contended, first, That she had broken a treaty with our allies, which we were bound to support: secondly, That she had engaged in schemes of ambition and aggrandizement, inconsistent with the interests of this country, and the general security of Europe: thirdly, That she had entertained principles

hostile to all governments, and more particularly to our own. In consequence of all these circumstances, you then declared in addresses to his Majesty, that if proper satisfaction was not obtained, a war must be the consequence. But while this was in agitation, they had themselves declared war, and been guilty of a sudden and unprovoked aggression upon this country. Is then that aggression, the climax of all their injuries, to induce you to abandon those reasonable views of satisfaction which before you entertained? The necessity of security against those three points, their disregard of treaties, their projects of ambition, and their dangerous principles, certainly becomes greater, inasmuch as their injuries are increased by the aggression. The argument for satisfaction, instead of being diminished, derives greater strength from this last circumstance. Indeed if we were foiled, we might then be induced to abandon those views with which we had set out, to submit to the hardship of our fate, and to receive such terms as necessity might dictate. But those terms which the motion prescribed are not such as are to be aimed at in the first instance, but such as are only to be submitted to in the last extremity. The question then is, whether we shall now court calamity, whether we shall, after a most successful commencement, voluntarily submit to all the most direful consequences of failure and defeat? At present we have both right and interest on our side. Shall we abandon both? Shall we, with the means of doing ourselves justice, pass by the most repeated and aggravated injuries, and grant peace to those whose unprovoked aggression alone compelled us to arm in our own defence? The question resolves itself into this; shall we, from a view of the present situation of the belligerent powers, risk more by vigorously persisting in the war till we have obtained its objects, or by abandoning it without either reparation or security? I shall only put the question, and leave it to you to decide.

Allow me only to subjoin a few remarks with reference to some points urged by the honourable gentleman who made the motion. We thought it necessary in the first instance, upon



being attacked, to enter vigorously into the war. Did we not see the evils which we might expect to encounter in carrying it on? Were we insensible of those calamities with which every war is attended? Have these evils and calamities turned out to be greater than at first were expected and foreseen? On this point I shall not refer you to the inflamed exaggerations of the honourable gentleman, who predicted from the war, even in its commencement, every possible calamity, such as the most alarming discontents at home, the total stagnation of commerce, and interruption of public prosperity; and who represented that its infallible consequence must be not to check the schemes and repulse the progress of the enemy, but, on the contrary, to unite their views and concentrate their vigour. No—however justified I might be in taking this statement, I shall refer you only to the more moderate apprehensions of those who, though convinced of the necessity of the war, were not insensible to its dreadful consequences. These apprehensions happily have been disappointed, and the very reverse of those calamities, which there was but too much reason to dread, has taken place. The war has been attended, even in its outset, with the most brilliant, rapid, and unexpected success. The views of the enemy have experienced a most effectual check, and every circumstance concurs to favour the hope of our being able completely to accomplish every object of the war. Is there any thing, then, in this situation, to induce us to abandon our views of reparation and security?—Are we to give up our claims of satisfaction, merely because we have been beyond example successful in repelling an unjust attack? To urge this point, would indeed be wasting the time of the house.

The only question that remains, is, at what period, and from what situation of affairs, we are to obtain that reparation and security which we desire? How long are we to wait for these objects? Are we to place them upon circumstances which may never happen, and thus pursue them without any possibility of attaining our end, which may be the case if we look to the establishment of any particular government in France? The answer

to these questions, like the degree of security and reparation to be obtained; depends upon circumstances of comparison. I declare, that on the part of this government there was no intention, if the country had not been attacked, to interfere in the internal affairs of France. This was clearly proved by the system of neutrality, on our part, so strictly observed. But having been attacked, I affirm, that there is nothing, either in the addresses to his Majesty, or the declarations of his servants, which pledges us not to take advantage of any interference in the internal affairs of France that may be necessary. I, for my own part, repeat, that I have given no such pledge. I do not say that if, without any interference, sufficient security and reparation could be had for this country, I would not, in that case, be of opinion that we ought to abstain from all interference, and allow their government to remain even upon its present footing. But I consider the question of obtaining these, while the same principle that now prevails continues to actuate their government, to be extremely difficult, if not impossible. I should certainly think, that the best security we could obtain, would be in the end of that wild ungoverned system, from which have resulted those injuries against which it is necessary to guard: There are, however, degrees and proportions of security which may be obtained, and with which we ought to rest satisfied; these must depend upon the circumstances that shall afterwards arise, and cannot be ascertained by any previous definition: But when you have seen yourselves and all Europe attacked—when you have seen a system established; violating all treaties, disregarding all obligations; and, under the name of the rights of man, uniting the principles of usurpation abroad, tyranny and confusion at home—you will judge, whether you ought to sit down without some security against the consequences of such a system being again brought into action. And this security, it appears to me, can only be obtained in one of three modes—1st, That these principles shall no longer predominate; or 2dly, That those, who are now engaged in them, shall be taught that they are impracticable, and convinced of their own want of power to carry them

into execution; or 3dly, That the issue of the present war shall be such as, by weakening their power of attack, shall strengthen your power of resistance. Without these, you may indeed have an armed truce, a temporary suspension of hostilities; but no permanent peace; no solid security to guard you against the repetition of injury and the renewal of attack. If on these points we have made up our minds, if we are determined to prosecute the war till we shall obtain proper satisfaction, and at least be able to provide some security for the continuance of peace, the present motion can only tend to fetter the operations of war, to delude our subjects, to gratify the factious, to inflame the discontented, to discourage our allies, to strengthen our enemies.

What could be the effect of any negotiation for peace in the present moment? It is not merely to the character of Marat, with whom we would have to treat, that I object; it is not to the horror of those crimes which have stained their legislators, crimes in every stage rising above another in point of enormity; but I object to the consequences of that character, to the effect of those crimes. They are such as render negotiation useless, and must entirely deprive of stability any peace which could be concluded in such circumstances. Where is our security for the performance of a treaty, where we have neither the good faith of a nation, nor the responsibility of a monarch? The moment that the mob of Paris becomes under the influence of a new leader, mature deliberations are reversed, the most solemn engagements are retracted, our free will is altogether controlled by force. In every one of the stages of their repeated revolutions we have said, "Now we have seen the worst, the measure of iniquity is complete, we shall no longer be shocked or astonished by the contemplation of added crimes and increasing enormities." The next mail gave us reason to reproach ourselves with our credulity, and, by presenting us with fresh crimes and enormities still more dreadful, excited impressions of new astonishment and accumulated horror. All the crimes which disgrace history have occurred in one country, in a space so short,



and with circumstances so highly aggravated, as outrun thought, and exceed imagination. Should we treat with Marat, before we had finished the negociation he might again have descended to the dregs of the people from whom he sprung, and have given place to a still more desperate villain. A band of leaders had swayed the mob in constant succession, all resembling in guilt, but each striving to improve upon the crime of his predecessor, and swell the black catalogue with new modes and higher gradations of wickedness—

*Ætas parentum peior avis tulit*

*Nos nequiores, mox daturos*

*Progeniem vitiosiore.*

No treaty can exist on their good faith independent of the terms of peace. Could they be bound by engagements more solemn than those to which they had pledged themselves in return for our neutrality? What new engagements can be more binding, or from what part of the character of the leaders, or what change in the principles of action, can we expect greater good faith, or stricter attention to engagements, than were exhibited by their predecessors? To make a treaty with them, would only be to afford them an opportunity of breaking it off before it was finished, or violating it in its very commencement.

But if the motion can answer no good purpose, can it answer no bad one? Might it not serve to encourage the French? What the honourable gentleman reserved as the last part of his argument, seemed particularly to have this tendency, the conclusion which he drew of the necessity of a peace from the situation of the country. If we are really come to that period of distress and embarrassment, that peace upon such terms is necessary, we must indeed submit to the decrees of Providence with the resignation with which we would submit to the sacrifice of our independance. If the period of our ruin is come, we must prepare to meet the fate which we cannot avert; we cannot meet it in any shape more dreadful than that which is proposed by the motion of the honourable gentleman. But our

situation is not yet so desperate. With respect to the embarrassment of credit, and the consequent interruption of commerce, I may safely say, that none have watched it more carefully than myself, none can have felt it more anxiously. The honourable gentleman states the means of relief, which have been adopted by the legislature, as, in his opinion, a proof of the extent of the calamity. For my part, I have formed a very different conclusion. The effect of the relief held out by the legislature, even before it was experienced, was completely to restore confidence and vigour to commerce—a proof that the embarrassed state of credit was only temporary, and, in a great measure, accidental. It clearly was not the effect of the war in which this country was engaged, but was influenced by the state of the continent, where the war had previously subsisted, and where it had taken away the market for our commodities. This embarrassment then could only be ascribed to that cause which had produced so many other calamities—that destroying spirit on the continent, which devours not only the fruits, but the seeds of industry—which overturns the very altar of society, and lets loose upon the world all the horrors of anarchy and desolation!—The question then is, whether we shall persevere in those exertions, by which we may at least remove this inconvenience, while, in co-operation with our allies, we strive to remove its cause—a cause which, if not checked, might have led to distress and ruin? The present motion, by magnifying the inconvenience which we have sustained into a calamity, is calculated to give a false impression, and give to what at most could only be the object of apprehension at home, all the mischievous consequences of a real distress abroad. It is calculated to discourage our allies, and inspire our enemies with confidence.

Having thus given my opinion as a member of parliament, there are some allusions which have been made to myself, as a member of the cabinet, which I am called upon to notice. I have only to say, that if ever that honourable gentleman should be a member of the cabinet, I trust that he will be better informed of the proceedings of the councils of other nations, than

at present he seems to be with what every man would desire to have some acquaintance with, those of his own. He stated, that he brought forward his motion with a view of giving support to certain opinions; which he understood to be entertained in the cabinet respecting the war. If he brought forward his motion from any motive of personal kindness to me, I have only to request that he will withdraw it. Not having lately been much in the habit of reading newspapers, I could not easily conceive to whom the honourable gentleman alluded. Indeed, there is no proposition which I could deem so impolitic to be brought forward by any of his Majesty's servants as the present motion. If there is any difference in opinion between me and the other members of the cabinet, I can only assure him, that I am the most determined to oppose the grounds and principles upon which that motion is founded. The question is, whether, in conjunction with our allies, with whom our own prosperity is so intimately connected, and with those prospects of success which our situation affords, we shall persevere vigorously to oppose those destructive principles with which, even though baffled at present, we may expect to contend to the latest hours of our lives? and on this issue I allow it to rest. I have spoken at much greater length than at first I intended; but on this subject, whenever it occurs, I find it impossible to keep those bounds which I had prescribed to myself, prompted as I am to enlarge by the dearest feelings and principles of my heart, affection and gratitude to my sovereign, and that duty which I owe as a member of the community.

The motion passed in the negative;

Ayes ..... 47

Noes ..... 187



*January 21, 1794.*

DEBATE on the address in answer to his Majesty's most gracious speech \* on opening the session.

The address, which was moved by Lord Clifden and seconded by Sir Peter Burrell, was strenuously opposed by Mr. Fox, who, at the conclusion of his speech, moved the following amendment,—“ To recommend to his Majesty to treat, as speedily as possible, for a Peace with France upon safe and advantageous terms, without any reference to the nature or form of the government that might exist in that country.”

Mr. PITT observed, that the motion which had been brought forward by the right honourable gentleman† who spoke last, amounted to little less than negativing the address, and upon this principle, what had previously been said by the noble lord‡,

\* “ *My Lords and Gentlemen,*

“ THE circumstances under which you are now assembled, require your most serious attention.

“ We are engaged in a contest, on the issue of which depend the maintenance of our constitution, laws, and religion; and the security of all civil society.

“ You must have observed, with satisfaction, the advantages which have been obtained by the arms of the allied powers, and the change which has taken place in the general situation of Europe since the commencement of the war. The United Provinces have been protected from invasion; the Austrian Netherlands have been recovered and maintained; and places of considerable importance have been acquired on the frontiers of France. The re-capture of Mentz, and the subsequent successes of the allied armies on the Rhine, have, notwithstanding the advantages recently obtained by the enemy in that quarter, proved highly beneficial to the common cause. Powerful efforts have been made by my allies in the south of Europe; the temporary possession of the town and port of Toulon has greatly distressed the operations of my enemies; and in the circumstances attending the evacuation of that place, an important and decisive blow has been given to their naval power, by the distinguished conduct, abilities, and spirit of my commanders, officers, and forces, both by sea and land.

“ The French have been driven from their possessions and fishery at New-

† Mr. Fox.

‡ Lord Mornington.

exactly referred to the subject of debate. From the length to which the discussion had been carried, and the lateness of the hour, it was impossible for him to go much into detail; yet in circumstances of such peculiar and transcendent importance as

foundland, and important and valuable acquisitions have been made both in the East and West Indies.

“ At sea our superiority has been undisputed, and our commerce so effectually protected, that the losses sustained have been inconsiderable, in proportion to its extent, and to the captures made on the contracted trade of the enemy.

“ The circumstances by which the farther progress of the allies has hitherto been impeded, not only prove the necessity of vigour and perseverance on our part, but, at the same time, confirm the expectation of ultimate success.

“ Our enemies have derived the means of temporary exertion, from a system which has enabled them to dispose arbitrarily of the lives and property of a numerous people, and which openly violates every restraint of justice, humanity, and religion : but these efforts, productive as they necessarily have been of internal discontent and confusion in France, have also tended rapidly to exhaust the natural and real strength of that country.

“ Although I cannot but regret the necessary continuance of the war, I should ill consult the essential interests of my people, if I were desirous of peace on any grounds but such as may provide for their permanent safety, and for the independence and security of Europe. The attainment of these ends is still obstructed by the prevalence of a system in France, equally incompatible with the happiness of that country, and with the tranquillity of all other nations.

“ Under this impression, I thought proper to make a declaration of the views and principles by which I am guided. I have ordered a copy of this declaration to be laid before you, together with copies of several conventions and treaties with different powers, by which you will perceive how large a part of Europe is united in a cause of such general concern.

“ I reflect with unspeakable satisfaction on the steady loyalty and firm attachment to the established constitution and government, which, notwithstanding the continued efforts employed to mislead and to seduce, have been so generally prevalent among all ranks of my people. These sentiments have been eminently manifested in the zeal and alacrity of the militia to provide for our internal defence, and in the distinguished bravery and spirit displayed on every occasion by my forces both by sea and land: they have

the present, though he could add little more, in point of argument, to what had already been so ably and fully stated by his noble friend, he considered it as incumbent on him expressly to deliver his opinion on several points which had been urged by the right honourable gentleman. He still considered it as ne-

maintained the lustre of the British name, and have shewn themselves worthy of the blessings which it is the object of all our exertions to preserve."

*"Gentlemen of the House of Commons,*

"I have ordered the necessary estimates and accounts to be laid before you, and I am persuaded you will be ready to make such provision as the exigencies of the time may require. I feel too sensibly the repeated proofs which I have received of the affection of my subjects, not to lament the necessity of any additional burdens. It is, however, a great consolation to me to observe the favourable state of the revenue, and the complete success of the measure which was last year adopted for removing the embarrassments affecting commercial credit.

"Great as must be the extent of our exertions, I trust you will be enabled to provide for them in such a manner, as to avoid any pressure which could be severely felt by my people."

*"My Lords and Gentlemen,*

"In all your deliberations, you will undoubtedly bear in mind the true grounds and origin of the war.

"An attack was made on us, and on our allies, founded on principles which tend to destroy all property, to subvert the laws and religion of every civilized nation, and to introduce universally that wild and destructive system of rapine, anarchy, and impiety, the effects of which, as they have already been manifested in France, furnish a dreadful but useful lesson to the present age and to posterity.

"It only remains for us to persevere in our united exertions; their discontinuance or relaxation could hardly procure even a short interval of delusive repose, and could never terminate in security or peace. Impressed with the necessity of defending all that is most dear to us, and relying, as we may, with confidence, on the valour and resources of the nation, on the combined efforts of so large a part of Europe, and, above all, on the incontestable justice of our cause, let us render our conduct a contrast to that of our enemies, and, by cultivating and practising the principles of humanity, and the duties of religion, endeavour to merit the continuance of the Divine favour and protection which have been so eminently experienced by these kingdoms."



cessary, in the present stage of the question, to refer to the original grounds upon which the war had been undertaken. The honourable gentleman on the other side had told them that these were of little consequence; and had insisted, that a secure and honourable termination of the war, was the only point which ought now to occupy their discussion. But it became more necessary to refer to these original grounds, as, while the present system continued, there was no probability of any such termination in the present moment.

In recurring then to the principles on which they set out, it would appear that the present war had not been hastily and rashly engaged in, but after due deliberation and mature conviction. It had been the opinion of the majority of that house, and of the great body of the nation, that it was undertaken upon grounds strictly defensive; and that the nation were equally compelled to engage in it by the obligations of duty, and the urgency of necessity. An honourable gentleman had asked—Would not we have engaged in the war, even if France had not previously declared against us? To this he would answer, what he had last session asserted, That if we did not receive satisfaction for past injuries, and security with respect to the future, most certainly we would. From the conduct of France, the war, in whatever form it appeared, could only be considered as aggressive on their part. As to what were the objects of the war in the first instance, they had frequently been brought forward in the course of last session, and had again, in the present debate, been stated by his noble friend. These objects were—First, that the system adopted by the French had developed principles destructive to the general order of society, and subversive of all regular government. Secondly, that the French themselves, with a view, no doubt, of extending their system, had been guilty of usurpations of the territory of other states. Thirdly, that they had discovered hostile intentions against Holland. Fourthly, that they had disclosed views of aggrandizement and ambition entirely new in extent and importance, and menacing in their progress not only the independence of this country, but the

security of Europe.—Unless it could be shewn, that we were originally mistaken ; that these were not proper objects of contest ; or that these objects were already gained ; the obligations and necessity which originally induced us to undertake the war, would operate with equal force at the present moment. In that case, even supposing that disappointment and difficulty had occurred in the prosecution of the war, they ought to have no other effect than to inspire us with additional vigour, and stimulate us to new exertions. Though not insensible to any failure or miscarriage that might be ascribed to the misconduct of those employed in conducting the operations of the war, yet these could not at all affect the general question, even if their conduct had as much demerit as had been stated by the honourable gentleman on the other side. However unpleasant he or his colleagues might feel from that peculiar situation of responsibility in which they stood, that was no reason why there should be any alteration in the sentiments of the country. If those disappointments and difficulties arose, not from the nature of the contest, but from the misconduct of those entrusted with the management of public affairs, the nation were not therefore to be discouraged in the career of exertion, and to shrink from the discharge of their duty. If those persons who conducted his Majesty's councils were unequal to the task, let us not think so meanly of the abilities of the country, as to suppose that there are not others of superior talents, without resorting to the few individuals who have ever since its commencement discovered principles inimical to the war. Surely it was not necessary to suppose that all the abilities of the nation were exclusively monopolized by those individuals. But if, on the other hand, the difficulty was ascribed to the nature of the contest itself, which, however he should much more regret, then would the argument with respect to the misconduct of ministers, or of those concerned in conducting the active operations of the war, be much weakened.

He would now, he said, proceed briefly to take a view of the different stages in which the question of the war had been de-



bated. At the conclusion of last session, he had placed its termination upon two circumstances; first, the being able to procure a peace upon terms likely to render it secure and permanent; and, secondly, an indemnity suitable to the expense which the nation should have incurred in carrying on the war. He had therefore, in the debate at the conclusion of last session, held out as a means, not only of annoying the enemy, but of securing those desirable ends, the propriety of an interference in the internal government of France. Not that he had absolutely insisted upon an entire subversion of that government; he had always asserted that if a peace could be made upon terms of security to this country, no consideration of the detestable characters of the ruling men in France, or of the crimes and horrors with which they were sullied, ought to influence this country to reject such terms.

The honourable gentleman had at that time admitted this principle to be right both in point of expediency and morality. And here he must advert to an unfair mode of argument which had been employed by the honourable gentleman. He had endeavoured to give a different turn to sentiments, by confounding the periods at which they were brought forward.—When the strict neutrality observed by this country, with respect to France, had been mentioned in his Majesty's speech, no injury had then been received from France. When circumstances altered, the same sentiments could no longer apply. If a foreign country, divided into two parties, discovered hostile intentions with respect to a nation, it would surely be perfectly fair in that nation to endeavour to oppose those parties to one another; more especially if the continuance of a system was the ground of that enmity, an interference to destroy that system was particularly justifiable. Such was the precise state of the case between France and this country. Last year this interference had been avowed and admitted as a ground of action, and its propriety could not surely be now denied. Since last year, a new scene had presented itself, more eventful and extraordinary even than those which had formerly been exhibited. However the



horrors and crimes which had taken place in former periods of the revolution might have exceeded all expectation, and transcended even the utmost stretch of imagination, they now appeared only to have paved the way for fresh horrors and accumulated crimes, beyond whatever fancy could have feigned, or fear conceived. Things had now come to such a crisis, that he had no difficulty to declare, that, while that system continued, peace was less desirable to him than a war, under any circumstances of disaster which he could possibly imagine. Not that he would contend that the mere abhorrence of crimes, that the mere detestation of character, except directly bearing upon our own safety, could constitute any reasons why we should engage in a war; but, in the present instance, the reasoning of his noble friend directly applied. That reasoning had gone—first, to shew the horror and enormity of the system which now prevailed in France: secondly, the danger of the extension of that system, if not speedily and effectually resisted: thirdly, the measures which were employed for the purpose of extending that system: fourthly, the prospects of success which we derived from the very nature of those measures, in our attempts to crush the progress of that system: and fifthly, that the success of those attempts depended upon the vigorous continuance of our warlike efforts; and that the circumstances of the case were such, as, in the present moment, entirely precluded all negotiation. The speech of his noble friend had been styled declamatory; upon what principle he knew not, except that every effort of eloquence, in which the most forcible reasoning was adorned and supported by all the powers of language, was to be branded with the epithet of declamation. The propositions which he had brought forward, had been urged not in a vague and general way—they had been supported by strong facts.

The history of the rulers of France had been taken from their own mouths, from records written under their inspection, and decrees sanctioned by their authority. From the nature of their government, there could be no dependance on the characters of whom it was composed. The shifting of persons took place

like the shifting of scenes ; but this change of persons produced no alteration in the conduct of the drama, the principles and proceedings still continued the same, or were distinguished in their progress only by increasing gradations of enormity. On the 21st of May, a new government, more dreadful in its character, and more fatal in its effects, than any which preceded it, had taken place—This was the revolutionary government.

My noble friend began, continued Mr. Pitt, by stating, that one of the leading features of this government was the abolition of religion. It will scarcely be maintained that this step could tend only to affect opinions, and have no influence upon the conduct of a nation. The extinction of religious sentiment was only intended to pave the way for the introduction of fresh crimes, and entirely to break asunder those bands of society which had been already loosened. It was intended only to familiarize the mind with guilt, and, by removing the obstacle of fear, to relieve it from the restraints of conscience. Infidelity, as my noble friend remarked, was only meant to go hand in hand with insurrection. A second measure of this revolutionary government was the destruction of property, a precedent which tended not less to destroy all ideas of justice, than the former to extinguish all sentiments of piety. Not less detestable was their conduct in their mode of inflicting punishments—a mode which took away from the accused all privilege of defence, and from their trials even the appearance of legal forms. All these crimes, however, they contrived to convert into sources of revenue. From the pillage of the churches,—from the destruction of property,—from the confiscation of the effects of those who were condemned, they derived the means for conducting their military operations. They pushed every resource to its utmost extent ; as for instance, the unbounded circulation of assignats, and the imposition of a forced loan. What can be expected from a system acting upon such principles, and supported by such resources ? Resources so desperate afford in themselves the most certain symptoms and indications of the approaching decay of that system with which they are connect-

ed. If then such be the system, if such the means of its support; and if France in consequence has, during these few months, experienced a degree of distress, the greatest perhaps ever known in that country during the same space of time, what prospect can there be of either stability or permanence to the present order of things? Can it be supposed to rest on that something approaching to instinct—that spirit of enthusiasm which has been so highly extolled by the gentlemen on the other side? What can we think of the probability of the duration of a system which has sent as many suspected persons to the prison or scaffold, as it has sent recruits to the field?

But it has been urged, that the French have distinguished themselves in the field; nor will it be denied, that, independently of any other circumstance, the spirit of a people called forth by the impulse which acts so strongly in such a situation, may have the effect to make them brave in the moment of action. But their efforts are merely the result of a system of restraint and oppression, the most terrible and gigantic, that has, perhaps, ever existed. They are compelled into the field by the terror of the *guillotine*—they are supported there only by those resources which their desperate situation affords; and in these circumstances, what can be the dependance on the steadiness of their operations, or what rational prospect can there be of the permanence of their exertions? On this ground, the more monstrous and terrible the system has become, the greater is the probability that it will be speedily overthrown. From the nature of the mind of man, and the necessary progress of human affairs, it is impossible that such a system can be of long duration; and surely no event can be looked for more desirable than a destruction of that system, which at present exists to the misery of France, and the terror of Europe.

As to the question of the honourable gentleman, whether I am never to make peace with the jacobins, it is extremely difficult to answer, and it would be neither prudent nor rational in me to give him any definitive reply in the present moment. It is a question, the solution of which must depend upon a com-



bination of events. As circumstances may vary, a different line of conduct must necessarily be pursued; nor would it be proper to bind up my discretion to act with a regard to those contingencies that may arise, by pledging myself at present to one set of measures. In the present circumstances, I have no hesitation to declare, that I would rather choose to persevere in the war, even amidst the worst disasters, and should deem such a conduct much more safe and honourable, than to conclude a peace with the ruling powers in France on their present system. The question of pursuing the war must, in every instance, depend upon the convenience with which it can be carried on to ourselves; and of that you must be best qualified to judge. On this great and interesting crisis, I have no hesitation to state, that I should think myself deficient in point of candour, if I did not most unequivocally declare, that the moment will never come, when I shall not think any alternative preferable to that of making peace with France, upon the system of its present rulers. The question I do not now mean to argue at large, both from the very advanced hour, and from the full discussion which it has already received. I shall only touch on one or two points which have been brought forward by the honourable gentleman in the course of his argument. His motion is certainly couched in very general terms, and such as might take in every thing that I have contended for. It recommends to his Majesty to conclude a peace whenever it can be done upon safe and advantageous terms, without any reference to the nature and form of government which may exist in France. I likewise am of opinion, that a safe and advantageous peace ought to be concluded; but that the security and benefits of that peace must depend upon the establishment of a government essentially different from the present. Though the motion, however, from the general terms in which it is expressed, is calculated to gain no precise object, it is yet capable of doing much mischief. It means and says, that this house entertains sentiments different from those expressed by his Majesty in his speech. It holds out to our allies that they are no longer to consider us as

eager in the cause, or acting upon the principles in which we embarked along with them; while it must impart encouragement and confidence to our enemies.

The honourable gentleman has said; that a treaty with the French government would afford us as good a security for the continuance of peace, as that which we derived from the treaty of Ryswick or Utrecht. He then, in his usual way, entered into a declamation against kings; and said that we might place equal dependance on the good faith of the present government of France, as on that of the court of Louis XIV. This I expressly deny; and I affirm; that had that king even succeeded in his ambitious projects to their full extent, what we should then have suffered might have been considered as a deliverance, compared with what must be the consequence of success attending the present French system. All the splendour of his court, all the abilities of his generals and discipline of his armies, all the great exertions which he was enabled to make, proceeded from a high sentiment of honour. The exercise of that power which he possessed, however directed to the purposes of his ambition, was regulated by certain principles, and limited within certain bounds. No such principles actuate the conduct of the present French rulers. They have contrived to banish all restraints, and, with an ambition more insatiable, they have at their disposal means of destruction much more formidable than that monarch ever possessed in the plenitude of his power.

The honourable gentleman has inaccurately stated, that I attach the same degree of importance to the restoration of monarchy in France, as to the destruction of the present system. This is by no means the case: I attach importance to the restoration of monarchy, from an opinion that, in the present state of France, some settled form should take place, in which the greater part of the people may be disposed to concur. The ancient government I consider as affording the best materials upon which they could work, in introducing any change into the fabric of their constitution. Besides, as I have thought it incumbent, in any interference which I proposed, in the internal affairs of that

country, to consult chiefly the happiness of the people, monarchy appeared to me the system most friendly to their true interests. In another respect, the honourable gentleman has misrepresented me, by stating the restitution of monarchy as an event which must necessarily be preceded by the conquest of France. I consider monarchy only as the standard under which the people of France might be united, the more especially as it is that form of government which my noble friend has proved to be most agreeable to the wishes of two-thirds of the inhabitants: But it has been said, that even the re-establishment of royalty would afford us no additional security for the permanence of peace, and that the French would still be equally formidable to this country. It is, however, surely a wild and extravagant assertion, that the monarchy of France, stripped as it would then be of much of its power, and diminished in its revenues, should be as formidable as a system which has proved itself to be more dangerous than monarchy ever was, in the plenitude of its power and the height of its greatness.

But there is one part of the argument of my noble friend to which I must particularly call your attention, and which, independently of every other consideration, precludes even the possibility of our treating with France in the present moment. A decree has been passed by the convention, forbidding to treat with any enemy till they shall have evacuated the territories of the republic; and on the 11th of April it was again decreed, that those persons should be punished with death who should propose to treat with any power which should not have previously acknowledged the independence of the French nation, and the unity and indivisibility of the republic, founded upon liberty and equality. Thus, by any proposal to treat, we should not only incur the disgrace of the most abject humiliation, but absolutely put ourselves at their mercy, and subject ourselves to the necessity of receiving any terms which they might be disposed to dictate. Are you then to withdraw your armies, to deprive yourself of the co-operation of your allies, to forego all your acquisitions, to give up Condé, Quesnoi, Tobago, Fort



Louis, all the factories in the East Indies? Are you to abandon all these acquisitions, the rewards of your past labours, and the pledges of your future success? Should you consent to do all this, should you even hasten to send an ambassador to treat with the convention, (and the right honourable gentleman \* I believe on a former occasion volunteered himself for that service,) you not only must acknowledge the unity and indivisibility of the French republic, but you must do so in their own way. You must acknowledge it as founded on liberty and equality. You must subscribe to the whole of their code, and by this act sanction the deposition of their sovereign, and the annihilation of their legislature. It may be said, that they would not insist upon all this to its full extent; but of this I can have but little confidence, when I compare their past declarations and their conduct. To whatever pitch of extravagance they may have reached in what they have said, they have always outstript it by what they have done. The absurdity of their expressions has in every instance been surpassed by the outrages of their conduct; nor can we have any hopes of more moderation from any change of parties. In all revolutions that have hitherto taken place, the first recommendation to favour has been hostility to England. The most violent party have always predominated. The leading feature in their character at present is a spirit of military enterprise, exerted, not for the purposes of ambition, but every where spreading, in its progress, terror and desolation. We are called in the present age to witness the political and moral phenomenon of a mighty and civilized people, formed into an artificial horde of banditti, throwing off all the restraints which have influenced men in social life, displaying a savage valour directed by a sanguinary spirit, forming rapine and destruction into a system, and perverting to their detestable purposes, all the talents and ingenuity which they derived from their advanced stage of civilization, all the refinements of art, and the discoveries of science. We behold them uniting the utmost savageness and ferocity of design with consum-

\* Mr. Fox.

mate contrivance, and skill in execution, and seemingly engaged in no less than a conspiracy to exterminate from the face of the earth all honour, humanity, justice, and religion. In this state, can there be any question but to resist, where resistance alone can be effectual, till such time, as, by the blessing of Providence upon our endeavours, we shall have secured the independence of this country, and the general interests of Europe?

It cannot be doubted, that there are many other points brought forward by the honourable gentleman with respect to the conduct of the campaign, and the treatment of neutral powers, which I am extremely anxious to meet, but into which the lateness of the hour forbids me to enter. My own strength, as well as the patience of the house, is already exhausted; and I the more willingly postpone them on the present occasion, as they will, with more propriety, form future and separate subjects of discussion.

The amendment was negatived:

Ayes ..... 59

Noes ..... 277

And the question on the address was afterwards put and agreed to.

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*April 7, 1794.*

On a motion for the third reading of the bill “for the encouragement and discipline of such persons as shall voluntarily enrol themselves for the general defence of the country,” Mr. Francis strongly opposed the principle of the measure, as contradictory to the bill of rights, which prohibited in express and positive terms the levying of money without the consent of parliament.

MR. PITT, in answering the various objections which had been urged, declared that,

Unwilling as he was, on any occasion, to take up the time of the house, and universal as the assent to the principle of the bill seemed to be, he could not resist the desire he felt to give

his sentiments on two or three points which had been substituted in the place of argument by gentlemen who opposed the principle of supplying the exigencies of the state, under certain circumstances, by voluntary contributions: and he could not refrain from calling the notice of the house to the way in which the argument had that night been managed. From the use which had been made of the argument respecting the letters, he said, one would be induced, *primâ facie*, to suppose, that the whole merits and substantial principles of the question depended on the circular letter of 1782. But, in order to get rid of the unavailing and useless subtleties which were built on that, he would wave the force which the present measure derived from the authority of that in 1782, and, for the time, suppose that there had been no such letter written, no answers to it received, no meetings held, no subscriptions entered into: yet, on a general view of the laws and constitution of the country, as they appeared written in statute books, handed down by precedents, and confirmed by the first and most respectable authorities, legal as well as political, that the page of British history, or the records of jurisprudence, could boast of, and on a fair construction of those laws and that constitution by principles of reason and truth, the measure would be found to stand on the firmest grounds, and to resist every attack that subtlety and ingenuity could possibly devise, or temerity venture to make upon it.

With regard to what had been said by a noble lord \* respecting the construction of the letter in 1782, it had nothing to do with the bill, but was merely an attempt to vindicate a particular set of men from a charge of inconsistency. He put it to the consideration of the house, whether a great national question ought to be suspended, merely for the purpose of proceeding on the trial of a few gentlemen for inconsistency? As to the measure of 1782, so far from thinking it a subject of criminalation, he thought it a measure highly laudable: but having thought it right in 1782, he should think it highly criminal,

\* Lord Wycombe.



indeed, to raise any objections to a similar measure in 1794, when the country, as respecting not only its internal state, but its various relations with the rest of Europe, so much more loudly demanded the adoption of such a measure. And here, he said, an explanation of his principal motive for opposing the production of the letters in answer to that of the secretary of state in 1782, came in with peculiar force, and would come more completely home to the bosoms of the house than at any other time: for producing the papers would be a virtual admission, that the merit of the present case hinged and depended on that of 1782, and those letters; an idea which he deprecated and was determined to resist *in limine*. He had therefore set his face against the motion for those papers; at the same time he was convinced that he was supported in it by the cordial sentiments and genuine opinion of the house. He must, he said, notice one observation, however, which had fallen from an honourable gentleman \*, namely, "That as the letters were not all produced in form, he would, in imitation of the practice of courts of law, deny the authenticity of such as were produced, and say that they were fabrications and forgeries." Such terms might possibly be used by the honourable gentleman when he thought them useful to his argument: for his part, he doubted whether they would not be reprobated for their coarseness, even in a court of law; but he begged leave to remind the honourable gentleman for his instruction, that he was then in a *court of parliament*, and that his language was, to say no worse of it, more adapted to an advocate at law than a member of parliament.

Gentlemen had laid a good deal of stress on the contents of the various letters which were written in answer to that of the Earl of Shelburne in the year 1782, and not produced by his learned friend (the Attorney-General) in the course of his speech on this subject the other night. He must confess that the eagerness displayed for the production of the whole of that correspondence, for the purpose of general information, did not

\* Mr. Grey.

appear to him to be totally free from suspicion. He had great doubt whether these gentlemen were in reality so ignorant of the contents of these letters as they seemed to be by their zeal for the production of them. He should be led to suppose, that if they had accounts of these letters of such accuracy as to be able to state their number with precision, they might by possibility have been enabled to read the contents of them. They stated the number in all to be 144. That they should have possessed themselves with such accuracy of the number of these letters, and yet be in total ignorance of their contents, was, under all the circumstances, what he felt himself much inclined to doubt. He believed too, that if his learned friend's selection of those letters was really an unfair one, some of these gentlemen would have found means to prove it; there was, however, no regular parliamentary ground for the production of them, and that he must again beg leave to say was the only reason why he objected to it; for as the case stood, there was nothing that made it regular or even decent that they should be produced. So little disposition had he to conceal these letters, that he would declare, if there was any one advocate on the other side, who had any real wish, as a matter of information, to know the contents of all the letters alluded to, either for himself or his party, there was not one of them he should not have an opportunity of looking at. He should be very glad to go further, and to make the correspondence complete, for he wished to shew the replies of the secretary of state to these letters, in 1782; but he was not able to do so, for he did not find any one of such replies at the office, not one reply now remaining in the office. If there were any replies, and these gentlemen knew of them, and would have the candour to bring them to him, he should be very glad to make an exchange with them. However, these were terms he had no right to insist on, they were only matter of civility, in which gentlemen were at liberty to follow their own inclination: he should not retract his offer: the answers they should have in the way he mentioned; for there was, in reality, no disposition on his part for

any concealment in the business:—This was the true and precise state of the question with regard to these letters. But, after all, what passed in the year 1782 was not fully applicable to the dispute between gentlemen on the other side, and his friends and himself; and after what had already been said on the subject, it would hardly be necessary for him to add to what had been advanced by his learned friends on all the topics. The great point which went directly to the principle of the thing, was clear, namely, that subjects might subscribe to a plan for the assistance of the executive government, on the sanction of parliament to be afterwards given. This was seemingly admitted by the right honourable gentleman himself\*, in the course of a debate on this subject on a former night; for, in speaking of the nature of the plan of 1782, he had admitted, that although there was no regular pay to the corps to be employed in pursuance of the recommendation of the secretary of state's plan, yet some of them were to be allowed something for loss of time, although he said he did not know how. It was not material how, for this was admitting there was to be an expense for which parliament had not made any provision. It was true that this was but a small object; but then if gentlemen were determined to adhere to a dry, strict, abstract principle, the instance, however trivial, was inconsistent with that principle, as much so as if the whole expense of government was involved in it.

The distinctions of the noble lord † all went to the mode of executing the measure, but not to the true constitutional point; for while he reprobated the subscribing for an army, he approved of raising subscriptions for ships, gave a number of cases which had been already mentioned in point by his learned friend (the attorney-general), and had added his contribution also, by stating an additional instance of the subscription for encountering the Spanish armada; for which last instance of his favour he begged the noble lord would accept his thanks. But while he conceived so much to be due to the noble lord's polite-

\* Mr. Fox.

† Lord Wycombe.



ness, he thought it was equally due to truth to say, that although the noble lord had said, that an augmentation of the navy could not hurt or endanger the constitution, an augmentation of the army might. The noble lord's distinction between subscribing for a navy and for an army was downright subtlety, mere fallacious casuistry, too flimsily and slightly covered to escape detection even from the weakest sight. For, first, (said Mr. Pitt) he states, that all voluntary contributions are illegal; yet admits that for a navy they would be justifiable: Here, then, ends the great abstract principle. But then the subscription, not illegal *per se*, is vitiated by its being for an army; this is directly confounding the end with the means; that is to say, the *end*, not the *means*, vitiated the measure: for if it was true that a subscription could not at all be taken, nor any money levied but by the direct order of parliament, it could be no more done for one branch of the public service than for the other. In the next breath the noble lord contends, that the case in 1794 was adverse to the laws and constitution; while that in 1782 is perfectly legal, because the same means (voluntary contributions) were not pursued, though the end was the same, namely, to raise an army: And thus the simple fact of raising an army in 1794, is to be the destruction of that constitution, and the ruin of the noblest fabric which the wisdom of man has ever raised; but, in 1782, it was so laudable, so legal, and so constitutional, as to be held up in contrast to the mischiefs now threatened. Whatever popular opinions might lead some persons to form more favourable ideas of one than of the other, the truth indeed was, that there was not in the history of this country to be found a war, in which the privilege of subscribing to the assistance of government against the enemy, had not been enjoyed by the people of this country, and in the course of which there were not to be found answers to all the objections that had been started to the present measure.

Having stated the fallacy and absurdity of this mode of reasoning, he proceeded to shew, that though the Earl of Shel-

burne's circular letter was alleged by gentlemen to have excluded all idea of subscription, it was not so understood through the country. The county of Sussex, which had, by public subscription, raised and supported a large military force in 1779, 1780, and in 1781, immediately on receiving that letter, and thinking it to imply a desire of subscription, set on foot contributions in consequence of it; and actually raised and grafted on their former establishment, no less than three additional companies. Here then, was, according to the principles maintained by the very gentlemen at that time in power, a manifest violation of the constitution. Why did they not then resist it? Why not make it a subject of parliamentary investigation? And what, he demanded to know, was so properly an object of their jealousy, as an illegal and unconstitutional act, committed on the footing and authority of their own letter? They should have stepped forward, and saved their country from the impending ruin. But did they do so?—No! They knew that the measure was legal, constitutional, and salutary; though, unfortunately for the credit of their politics, their sentiments changed with their situations, and they now thought it illegal, unconstitutional, and mischievous!!

He next proceeded to shew, that, taking them in a legal point of view, voluntary contributions were equally justifiable; and he established it by a variety of the most indubitable authorities. In the year 1746, he said, it was called into question, and decided unequivocally by Lord Hardwicke. On that occasion many great men raised regiments at their own expense: and he wished to know who that man was that would be so regardless of reputation as to say that great men might legally, and with safety to the constitution, subscribe, and that three or four hundred yeomen should not?

Gentlemen had said, that, if contributions were purely spontaneous, they were legal, but if made on the solicitation of government, not so. To the spirit and principle of this distinction he avowed that he would never assent: but, taking

for granted that it was so, no skill or ingenuity could rescue the case of 1782 from coming under that anathema; for he would maintain that the letter of the secretary, and the plans inclosed in it, contained in them a solicitation which in 1794 would be called a mandate.

He entered into a summary animadversion on all the precedents, since the revolution down to the year 1778, which had been quoted by the attorney-general on a former occasion; and maintained that they were decisive of the question.

He reminded the house, that, in the year 1759, the city of London entered into large subscriptions. The county of Hants, by a subscription, of which he had then a list in his possession, raised 800 men. The ministers of that day returned thanks, in the king's name, to the city for their contributions; and he put it to the sense and candour of the house to decide, whether the very act of returning thanks was not as strong a suggestion to other parts to do the same, as any specific invitation from ministers could have been?

One of the innumerable instances in which contributions had been solicited, that in 1778, he said, was the only one that met with opposition, though, in the whole of that war, it was practised at various periods, and in divers places. He had for many reasons great respect for the illustrious characters (Lord Camden, Mr. Burke, and others) who gave their opinions on that subject, against the legality of subscriptions; but with all the esteem he had for them, he could not help observing that no man who had observed upon human nature, could fail to see that in the most enlightened minds there was a bias, which on certain occasions, and under certain circumstances, operated upon the judgment, and sometimes led it to mistake the means for the end; and men, in deciding upon principle, even were subject to this abuse of the understanding. This, with all the due deference for the great characters he alluded to, appeared to him to have been the case with them, in the discussion of the subject, in the year 1778: they were then deciding on a question, implicating the American war—a war against the prin-



ciple of which they had often protested, and therefore they thought they supported the principle they so virtuously maintained by deciding against the measure then proposed, and, without knowing it, confounded the means with the end. In this view did it appear to parliament, which determined against the opinion of these great men. But, supposing the opposition had succeeded then, it would not go to vitiate the present measure, it being, of all other cases, the least analogous to it; for the subscription of that day was to be applied to such purposes as the king should think proper to direct, whereas that at present proposed was to be applied by parliament to a particular object. Since that period, viz. in 1779, 1780, and 1781, many instances had occurred of a similar kind; and he maintained, that it was presumption amounting to proof, that the acquiescence of the house in all those instances up to 1782, notwithstanding the agitation of the question in 1778, arose from a conviction of the legality and usefulness of the measure: and to confirm the house in the positions he had laid down, he said he would mention, that the king's speech in 1782 referred to the subscriptions, and particularly to an offer of a man of war by a respectable individual, now a noble lord \*. Immediately after that, there appeared on the records an entry of a motion by Alderman Wilkes, to prevent contributions; and, notwithstanding all those circumstances, the address of the house of commons on that speech passed *nemine contradicente*; —a pretty clear proof that parliament at that day did not behold with so much terror, as was now expressed, the idea of subscriptions.

Gentlemen, he said, talked loudly of liberty, while they seemed to be most willing to encroach on it when it answered their own purposes. He knew that a portion of individual liberty was often necessarily sacrificed for the general good; but it must be in cases where the general evil would be greater than the individual. In the present case, the first liberty of the subject, the right of disposing of his own property, was attempt-

\* Lord Lonsdale.

ed to be torn from him ; while the general good would be promoted by the free exercise of that right, and the unrestrained enjoyment of that liberty. He laid it down as a maxim in the law and constitution of England, that every man had a right to apply any part of his property he pleased for any legal purpose, unless expressly prohibited by statute ; and maintained, there was not in the whole of our statute-book one prohibition with regard to subscriptions in carrying on war. The bill of rights, he said, had no more application to this subject, than any other in the statute-book ; and having said this, he disclaimed all intention of speaking with disrespect of that great and justly revered law ; he disclaimed all idea of offering any disrespect to any gentleman who might quote it. He thought, however, it had been misapplied.

He adverted to the several statutes against *Benevolences*, and shewed, to demonstration, that they were really statutes against exactions. The people had been compelled to contribute, and exchequer compulsory process had issued against them, to exact that which was falsely denominated a free-will offering.

On the reason of the thing, he said, he should be very short. What were the grounds of the alarm which gentlemen had expressed ? They said this plan went to overturn the constitution, because it trenched on the principles of the constitution, by interfering with the functions of the house of commons. The whole of that point appeared to him to depend on the mere application of terms. It was known that in this country no money could be taken from any individual without his consent, but he could only give, it was said, his consent by the collective voice of the people in parliament ; that the house of commons were the guardians of the public purse, and it was necessary that the conduct of the executive power should recur often, and be subject to the revision of that house. He conceived this to be just for internal police, and for external defence, both in time of war and peace, and that nothing should be carried on without that house knowing it, and that they

were the means of granting to the king the necessary supply. That dominion which the commons exclusively possessed over the general wealth of the nation, was a wise provision to render the executive government dependent on parliament, and by that means indirectly responsible for the just discharge of their office. Would any man tell him that the subscriptions in question really interfered in an essential manner with that principle, or that, in point of fact, these subscriptions trenched on that constitutional controul, which the house of commons had over the real and substantial supplies to be given to the executive power, so as to endanger the constitution itself? The fact was, that, in numberless instances, that abstract right had been often intrenched upon, and yet it never tended to raise apprehensions in any man. It was, indeed, he thought, a strange, a chimerical mode of speaking, to say, that, at the moment when every thing in the circumstances of the times tended to push people to opposite motives of action, they were likely to make the king independent, and that the people would conspire for the destruction of themselves, their property, and their constitution. The navy and army establishments, he observed, were in ordinary four millions of money annually; in time of war much more was added: yet while gentlemen argued that the subscriptions must be inconsiderable, and inadequate to any material purpose, the general tenour of their argument led to the supposition, that the voluntary contributions possible to be raised would be sufficient to furnish, not only the ordinaries, but the extraordinaries also, immense as they were; a supposition so absurd, that it should serve to excite pity and laughter rather than any serious consideration.

Cases which, though extreme, were yet not physically impossible, might be brought forward *ad infinitum*, in order to extinguish all those principles of action which arise from experience and probability. Against such extreme cases there was no guard but the great improbability of their ever occurring; but what power that even imagination could conceive would be safe, if that principle of suspicion was carried to the extent to



which art and ingenuity might strain it? gentlemen might find objections on the dry, abstract, theoretical point, but there was no real or probable danger, and this had been found by the practice of every war; and when gentlemen were disposed to insist on the theoretic inconsistency of a subscription from individuals, and that of having a representative body for granting supplies, he would refer them to every period of our history, and then tell them,—My experience is a good argument against your theory. It is not (said he) by attending to the dry, strict, abstract principles of a point, that a just conclusion is to be arrived at in political subjects. They are not to be determined by mathematical accuracy. Wisdom is to be gained in politics, not by any one rigid principle, but by examining a number of incidents; by looking attentively at causes, and reflecting on the effects they have produced; by comparing a number of events together, and by taking, as it were, an average of human affairs. This is the true way to become wise in politics: not by adopting that false philosophy which seeks perfection out of that which is imperfect in its nature; which refers all things to theory, nothing to practice; which rejects experience, and brings the principles of science to things not capable of receiving them; which substitutes visionary hypotheses for the solid test of experiment, and bewilders the human mind in a maze of opinions, when it should be employed in directing to action; and which would proceed, as it were *per saltum*, from the indulgences of theoretical systems to the execution of them: but the chasm is wide, indeed, between the practice and the imaginary point to which those alarmists would carry things: that pedant politician who thinks to make a political machine perfect in all its parts, and regular in all its movements, thinks of that which can exist only in the imagination; the various checks and counter-checks, by which he might hope to regulate its motions, and correct its aberrations, would serve only to clog its movements, impede its progress, and overload it with difficulties.

In some respects, Mr. Pitt said, he was governed in the

present measure by a principle of another kind. In contemplating the benefits likely to result from it, he could not help considering what sentiments it proclaimed, and what effects it would have on the minds and opinions of the world; and though it had been argued, that it would tend to mark men out, and raise invidious distinctions in society, he would say, that, if it served the purpose of actual defence on the one hand, or of intimidating and overawing the enemy on the other, and baffling their plans, it was not to be rejected because some persons were less alive than others to the good of the country; and though one honourable gentleman had said, he would not subscribe, and another \* had *handsomely* said, that he would not give a doit! he hoped the number who were not alive to the interests of their country would be found to be but very few.

With regard to the point as a measure of economy, and with a view of saving much of the expense of the public service under the ways and means for raising the supplies, he confessed he had no idea of meeting this measure on that footing: not that he thought it would not go to a considerable extent, but he regarded it as an act purely voluntary in the people of this country; as an act merely voluntary, having the sanction of parliament, which mixed the zeal and warmth of individual will with the power of legal authority, and gave an energy which no law could do; as an act which interested the hearts of the inhabitants of the kingdom, and gave new energy and fresh vigour to the cause in which we were engaged, by shewing that not only the legislature, but that also the individuals of this country, were warm in the pursuit of the war, as involving every thing that was held dear to a man in a civilized state; and therefore he hoped and trusted it would succeed. A contrary impression would be mortifying to him; but he had no doubt of the zeal, the courage, and the magnanimity of the people of England. Nor was it to England that the animation of this practice would be confined, for it would spread over the other parts of Europe, and tend to dispel the delusion which

\* Mr. M. A. Taylor.

the present rulers of France, and their emissaries and agents, had been artfully exciting in every part of that quarter of the globe; it would shew them, that the hopes held out, that if they invade this country they would find followers and supporters in great numbers, was a gross imposition on the credulity of the French, and a libel on the loyalty of the people of England; that the British people are, with few, very few exceptions indeed, as loyal to their sovereign, and as attached to their constitution, as they are brave, and determined to repel the encroachments of a perfidious, sanguinary enemy. For what, he demanded, was so likely to put an end to those menaces and insults, as to see individual exertion succouring and outrunning the voice and efforts of parliament? He would repeat therefore, that the measure involved in the present bill was agreeable to the spirit of the constitution, and highly expedient under the circumstances of the country.

The question for the third reading of the bill passed without a division.

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*May 16, 1794.*

A message from his Majesty having been delivered to the House on the 12th instant, informing them, "that seditious practices to an alarming extent had been carried on by certain societies in London, in correspondence with societies in different parts of the country, tending to subvert the laws and constitution of the kingdom, and introductory of the system of anarchy prevailing in France; and recommending to the House to adopt such measures as might appear necessary;" and the books and papers of the said societies having been in consequence laid before the House, and referred by them to a committee of secrecy;—the report of this committee was this day brought up.

On its being read by the clerk at the table, Mr. PITT rose:

He said, the committee of secrecy had formed their opinion on the papers submitted to their examination with the greatest expedition, and their report stated so fully and particularly those circumstances, which in the judgment of the committee required the immediate attention of parliament, that he felt it



hardly necessary for him to do more than shortly to recapitulate the different objects to which that report applied, and the various particulars which came under their consideration. Gentlemen would perceive that that report, so expeditiously laid before the house, contained a general view of the transactions referred to the committee, without waiting for a more minute investigation, and was shortly this:—that it appeared to them that a plan had been digested and acted upon, and at that moment was in forwardness towards its execution, the object of which was nothing less than to assemble a pretended convention of the people, for the purposes of assuming to itself the character of a general representation of the nation; superseding, in the first place, the representative capacity of that house, and arrogating, in the next place, the legislative power of the country at large. It would be for the house to consider whether the circumstances contained in the report, impressed their minds with the same conviction with which they had impressed the minds of the committee. If they did, he could not have a doubt but that they would lead to the same practical conclusion, namely, that, if such designs existed, if such designs had been acted upon and were in forwardness, there was not one moment to be lost in arming the executive power with those additional means, which might be sufficient effectually to stop the further progress of such a plan, and to prevent its being carried into final execution.

It was chiefly necessary for the house, in considering the report, to recollect, that a great part of it was merely introductory; and that, though it stated transactions of a date long antecedent to the period in which the acts of the societies implicated had assumed the serious aspect of practical treason, and though they were of notorious publicity, it was nevertheless necessary to bring them forward again to observation, to give a clue to unravel the complicated circumstances of the plan, and, by comparison and combination of them with the subsequent proceedings of the individuals concerned, to shew, that from the beginning their views were the same, and that the

pretext of reform, under which they masked their purpose, was far from being the true object of their intentions. The house would also carry along with them, that the committee, having been stinted in point of time, had not been able to digest methodically, or point out distinctly, the various minute parts that formed the great and momentous business before them. In order to give the house, however, as soon as possible, possession of so much of it as might serve to point out the daily and increasing approximation of danger, the committee, in examining and making up the report, had kept in view the great object, the leading design of the plan: for it was not to be imagined, that the distance of the transactions in point of time, and the fact of their being previously known, made them the less material as comments on those parts of their conduct which were discovered in their full maturity.

It would be seen by the report, that the papers found, as far as related to that part of the conspiracy which immediately implicated the corresponding society, and that for constitutional information, contained two years' correspondence with various other societies in this and a neighbouring country; and from these, coupled with their subsequent and more recent proceedings, it was evident that those societies, which would be found to be now setting on foot a convention, had had such a measure in contemplation from the very outset; that it was conceived so long ago as two years back; was openly avowed in their correspondence, but kept in reserve to be reduced to practice as soon as a seasonable occasion should offer. This whole system of insurrection would appear, from the papers found with them, to be laid in the modern doctrine of the rights of man;—that monstrous doctrine, under which the weak and ignorant, who are most susceptible of impression from such barren abstract positions, were attempted to be seduced to overturn government, law, property, security, religion, order, and every thing valuable in this country, as men acting upon the same ideas had already overturned and destroyed every thing in France, and disturbed the peace and endangered the safety, if not the existence, of



every nation in Europe. However gentlemen might ground arguments against the cautionary measures taken to prevent the evil effects of that pernicious doctrine, on the contemptible situation of the authors, and the absurdity of the principles of those books in which it was inculcated, yet, allowing the one to be in the extreme as contemptible as the others were absurd, it was no light or trivial circumstance, when, deduced from it, alarming principles were promulgated and eagerly adopted by large bodies; and when the proceedings of all those jacobin societies would appear (as the papers before the house fully demonstrated) to be only comments on that text;—a text for the inculcation of which those societies were the disciples here, as their corresponding French brethren were the instruments for disseminating it in France, and extending it by carnage and slaughter to all other parts of Europe.

It would appear, that, prior to the enormities committed in France, a correspondence had been carried on between those societies and the jacobin club in Paris, and that delegates were sent from them to the national convention, and received formally by that assembly; and that, at the very moment when the jacobin faction which usurped the government of that country had commenced hostilities against Great Britain, those societies still, as far as they could, had pursued the same conduct, expressed the same attachment to their cause, adopted their appellations, forms of proceeding and language, and, in short, had formed a settled design to disseminate the same principles, and sow the same seeds of ruin, in their own country. It would be found, not only that the most effectual plans which cunning could devise, had been laid to carry this design into practice, but in the report would be seen a statement of the catalogue of manufacturing towns marked out, as the most likely (from the vast concourse of ignorant and profligate men who necessarily collect in such places) to adopt their plans, and corresponding societies established there, to keep up the chain of seditious intercourse, and promulgate and give it universal circulation. Gentlemen would find in that catalogue a well-chosen selection



of the places where those people dwell, who must be naturally supposed most ready to rise at the call of insurrection; who were most likely to be blinded by their artifices, and prejudiced by professions; whose understandings were most subject to be misled by their doctrines, and rendered subservient to their views, and whom fraudulent persuasion, proneness to discontent, and the visionary and fallacious hope of mending their condition by any alteration of it whatever, would be most likely to congregate into an enormous torrent of insurrection, which would sweep away all the barriers of government, law, and religion, and leave our country a naked waste for usurped authority to range in, uncontrolled and unresisted.

In considering this subject, the house could not but remark the extraordinary manner in which those societies had varied their plans of operation; sometimes acting in undisguised audacious hostility, sometimes putting on the mask of attachment to the state and country; one day openly avowing their intentions, as if purposely to provoke the hand of justice; the next, putting on the mask of reform, and affecting the utmost zeal for the preservation of the constitution. In their letter to the society at Norwich, would be seen a plain avowal of their object, an *apology for deigning to apply to parliament*; and a candid, sincere confession, that, not to the parliament, not to the executive power were they to look for redress, but to the convention which they proposed to erect, and to themselves: afterwards they recommended persevering in petitioning for reform to be used as a mask to their designs, which they were to throw off when time served, and a period propitious to their views should arrive. Happily for this country, and for the whole world, they had prematurely thought that period at hand, and thrown off the mask just when the bulk of the nation unanimously were uniting with government in vigilance and care for its protection, and in the resolution to oppose their efforts.

By a due attention to the correspondence of that society, the house would find, in their communication with the British convention at Edinburgh, which still retained some flimsy remnant

of that disguise, some remains of that hypocrisy assumed to hide those designs which, though not publicly declared, too obviously appeared, that they styled this convention the representatives of the people, clothed in all the right to reform, and send delegates to it; and, when some of the most mischievous and active of its members fell under sentence of the law, that they boldly asserted their innocence, nay their merits, directly in the teeth of that law, paid every tribute of enthusiastic applause to the persons convicted by the verdict of juries legally constituted, and of respect to the convention, pronouncing them objects of panegyric and envy. In conformity to their prior declarations, and to the plans of insurrection laid by them, they made the legal condemnation of those guilty persons the signal, as they styled it, of *coming to issue* on the point, "Whether the law should frighten them into compliance, or they oppose it with its own weapons, to wit, force and power?" that is to say distinctly, Whether they should yield obedience to the laws of their country, or oppose them by insurrection? That was avowed in as plain and marked language as man could possibly conceive. He thought that that case, so circumstanced, and supported by such a variety of coincident matter, was as strong a case as the mind of man could well imagine; yet, singular though it might appear, all this was but introductory to facts of a still stronger nature which were to follow. He should call the attention of the house to the history of a society which, despicable and contemptible though the persons who composed it were, as to talents, education, and influence, yet when looked at with cautious attention, and compared with the objects they had in view, and the motives on which they acted, namely, that great moving principle of all jacobinism, the love of plunder, devastation, and robbery, which now bore the usurped name of liberty, and that system of butchery and carnage which had been made the instrument of enforcing those principles, would appear to be formidable in exact proportion to the meanness and contemptibility of their characters. Of that society the characteristic was, that, being composed of the lower orders of people, it had within it the means

of unbounded extension, and concealed in itself the seeds of rapid increase. It had risen already to no less than thirty divisions in London, some of those containing as many as six hundred persons, and was connected by a systematical chain of correspondence with other societies scattered through all the manufacturing towns where the seeds of those principles were laid, which artful and dangerous people might best convert to their own purposes. It would appear in proof, that that society had risen to an enormous height of boldness, and erected in itself, in express terms, a power to watch over the progress of parliament, to scan its proceedings, and prescribe limits for its actions; beyond which if it presumed to advance, that august society was to issue its mandate, not only to controvert that act, but to put an end to the existence of parliament itself: so that if the parliament should think it necessary to oppose, by any act of penal coercion, the ruin of the constitution, that would be the war-whoop for insurrection; the means of our defence would become the signal for attack, and the parliament be made the instrument of its own annihilation. Such language as this, coming from people apparently so contemptible in talents, so mean in their description, and so circumscribed in their power, would, abstractedly considered, be supposed to deserve compassion, as the wildest workings of insanity; but the researches of the committee would tend to prove, that it had been the result of deep design, matured, moulded into shape, and fit for mischievous effect when opportunity should offer.

About six weeks since, there had arisen a new æra in this history of insurrection, in which the house might contemplate those great machines of jacobinism, the societies alluded to in the report. At that period the corresponding society had laid, in due form, before the society for constitutional information, a deliberate and deep-concerted plan for actually assembling a convention for all England; not to be the representatives of these particular bodies for the accomplishment of particular legal purposes, but to be the representatives of the whole body of the people of England, and evidently to exercise legislative and



judicial capacities, to overturn the established system of government, and wrest from the parliament that power which the people and the constitution had lodged in their hands. Within a few weeks the plan was fixed upon to be carried into execution, and in their circular letter they precisely and emphatically stated, that *no time was to be lost*; and lest, by any possibility, their ruinous intentions should be misunderstood, the letter was addressed equally to all parts of the island, and circulated with a share of vigour, cunning, and address, truly astonishing. It contained also a declaration, that a central spot was fixed upon, which they would not venture to name till they had assurances of the fidelity of those to whom they were to disclose it; which central spot they chose, as they themselves asserted, for the purpose of having with greater facility the delegates of the whole island present when they assembled; and they particularly desired each separate society to send an exact account of the number of its members, friends, and adherents, in order to estimate their force. Of this they informed the society for constitutional information, in a letter, accompanied with a set of resolutions.

It might be objected that men of the description which he had stated, could not be expected to act so consistently, and under such well-managed disguise; but when, on inspection, it appeared that their plans had been carried on with a degree of cunning and management that greater men in worthier causes had failed in manifesting, that objection could have no weight when opposed to evidence thus incontrovertible. Who was there that knew what jacobins and jacobin principles were, but must see, in the pretences of reform in parliament held out by these societies, the arrogant claims of the same class of men as those who lorded it in France, to trample upon the rich, and crush every description of men, women, and children; the dark designs of a few, making use of the name of the people to govern all; a plan founded in the arrogance of wretches, the outcasts of society, tending to enrich themselves, by depriving of property, and of life, all those who were distinguished either for personal worth

or for opulence?—a plan which had been long felt by the unfortunate people of France in all its aggravated horrors, and which, he feared, would long, very long, continue to be felt by that ill-fated country.

From the period he had mentioned, they had acted upon that horrible plan; and subsequently (on the 14th of April) the house would find a meeting of the society, their proceedings in which meeting, carried with them no faint illustration of what they might be expected to do in the full majesty of power. There would be found resolutions arraigning every branch of the government, threatening the sovereign, insulting the house of peers, and accusing the commons of insufficiency; there would be found notice taken of the measures of parliament, which had been previously made the signals for an insurrection of the people, and declarations that certain measures, if adopted, whether with or without the consent of parliament, should be rescinded, under their doctrine, *Salus populi suprema lex*, and that the constitution had been utterly destroyed. Could there be a more explicit avowal of their views? All the materials from whence proof of these allegations was drawn, rested on their own authentic records, and on the express and unequivocal avowal of their own deliberate acts in their meditated system of insurrection. This was the essence of the subject; but if the house were of opinion, that this so deeply affected the safety and existence of parliament itself, and struck at the root of government and the constitution, as to demand interference, there were, in addition, other things which must contribute not a little to increase the impatience of the house to baffle the views of those conspirators, and stop the final execution of their projects.

For his part, Mr. Pitt said, such was his opinion of the British constitution, that, even supposing the executive government had been guilty of every neglect of their duty in watching over its safety, and parliament had been supine under those manifestations of sedition, he conceived its enemies must nevertheless have failed of success; but, however persuaded he might be of



this fact, it was still right to prevent, by timely interference, the small misery which a short struggle might necessarily produce, and to save the nation at large from the reproach, that they had seen such acts, and heard such avowals, without having adopted proper steps to check their execution, and punish those who were so wicked as to devise them. There were stated in the close of the report, on grounds not light or trivial, though not minutely entered into in the report till after fuller investigation by the committee, allegations *that arms had been actually procured and distributed by these societies*, and were in the hands of those very people whom they had been striving to corrupt; and that even now, instead of breaking up this formidable league, and disbanding and dispersing this jacobin army, they had shewn themselves immoveably bent on the pursuit of their purpose, and displayed preparations of defiance and resistance to the measures of government.

It remained for the house to consider what was to be done? and, in considering that, they would not refer to the quality of the persons, but to the nature and magnitude of the objects they had in view. It would be found, when the causes and proceedings were taken into contemplation, that so formidable a conspiracy had never before existed. The inquiry was yet far from complete, and unfit for final decision, the documents being very voluminous; but the committee had deemed it their duty to shew the house that instant precaution was necessary, and had therefore, though unable to finish the important research, laid before the house what they had yet done, which he hoped would be thought sufficient grounds for adopting the measure he intended to propose. It had been usual, in time of danger, to enact a temporary suspension of the *Habeas Corpus* law. As that great and essential benefit to the subject had been suggested, and provided for the preservation of the constitution on the one hand, so, on the other, it could not exist if the constitution was gone. The temporary sacrifice of that law might be, on certain occasions, as necessary to the support of the constitution, as the maintenance of its principles was at all others. It had been suspended at a



time when the constitution and liberty of the country were most peculiarly guarded and respected; and such a suspension was more particularly called for at this crisis, when attempts were made to disseminate through the realm, principles and means of action that might endanger that constitution, for the preservation of which that law had been made, and which might produce much more lamentable effects, and at last require a remedy greater in extent and more dreadful, than the one now proposed. This was not his opinion alone, but the sentiments of all those respectable gentlemen of the committee who had investigated the matter. He should therefore move "for leave to bring in a bill to empower his Majesty to secure and detain all such persons as should be suspected of conspiring against his person and government."

The motion was carried,

Ayes ..... 201

Noes ..... 39

and, after another division on a motion made by Mr. Grey, "for a Call of the House," which was negatived, the bill was presented, read a first and second time, and voted into the committee; where its various clauses being adjusted and agreed to, the report was received, and the bill ordered to be engrossed and read a third time the next day.

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### *May 17, 1794.*

On a motion for the third reading of the bill, which had been introduced the preceding day, "for suspending the operation of the Habeas Corpus Act," the measure was strenuously opposed, particularly by Mr. Grey, Mr. Sheridan, and Mr. Fox.

Mr. PITT, in defence of the motion, observed, that from the lateness of the hour, and having but little inclination to go much at length into a question which had been already so fully discussed, it was not his intention to detain the house for any great length of time; and, indeed, the very able manner in which his honourable friends had already argued it, rendered it

unnecessary for him to say much. The right honourable gentleman \* commenced, and had concluded, his speech, by holding out, as an incontrovertible argument, that the measures at present necessarily adopted by administration, would impair materially, if not totally destroy, the constitution of this country; a mode of reasoning that he could never suffer to pass without a reply. Pursuing that strain of argument, the honourable gentleman had pronounced, in terms of unrivalled eloquence, a most pathetic funeral oration on the supposed departed liberties of British subjects, which he had stated as having expired with the introduction of the present bill—a bill, in his mind, nothing worse, or more dangerous in its consequence, than what had been known, from the experience and practice of our ancestors, to be a wise and proper measure, when the existing circumstances of the country demanded such a measure, and required that the hands of the executive government should be strengthened. That necessity, however difficult it might be to convince that honourable gentleman of its existence, he trusted, had been fully made out to the house, and to all those who had given themselves the trouble of bestowing the slightest consideration on the subject; and such necessity having been proved to exist, it came then to be considered, whether the danger was of sufficient magnitude to justify the suspension of the *Habeas Corpus* act, which, properly speaking, was the only question for consideration before the house. That measure, he granted, was of considerable importance; it was a remedy only to be applied when the emergency was so great as really to call for it. The fair question, therefore, which gentlemen were to put to their own minds, was simply this, Whether the danger with which the constitution of the country was threatened by the practices now exposed, was, or was not, greater than any danger which could result from putting into the hands of the executive government, a more than ordinary degree of power, for the purpose of resisting what they considered, and what parlia-

\* Mr. Fox.

ment considered, a very dangerous conspiracy? The honourable gentleman had carried his argument so far as to say, that if the bill passed, all the rights of the people, and all the privileges of parliament, would be at once destroyed—a doctrine which he could never admit, by whatever ability or eloquence it might be supported. On that point it was important for the consideration of the house, a point which had not yet been touched on by any of those who had argued the question, that the bill was limited in its duration; that it was but a temporary measure, adapted to a present existing evil, and was to continue in force for little more than six months; and that it invested the executive government with a temporary discretionary power, to imprison suspected persons for that limited time, without bringing them to trial;—all the rights of the people, and all the privileges of parliament, remaining uninterruptedly the same, attaching all the time the same responsibility upon ministers to which they were liable in every other situation in which they acted, and equally answerable for any abuse of this power, if they should abuse it, as they were for the abuse of any other discretionary power which was vested in them. Stating the question in that view, which was the real and proper state of it, could any gentleman think that all the liberties of the subject, and all the privileges of parliament, would be so completely annihilated by the bill, as to make it a question, whether a member of parliament ought, or ought not, to give up his attendance in parliament, or the interest of his constituents? He would not do those honourable gentlemen the injustice to suppose that any of them thought so for a moment; and it would not be doing justice to their own characters, were they to make any such declaration.

The right honourable gentleman, and those who argued on the same side with him, had contended, that in this, and other measures of government, there appeared a strong imitation of the French system of procedure; upon what grounds they knew best; hitherto they had never taken the trouble of explaining them to the house. Wherein was the comparison to be found? He begged gentlemen to attend a little to the compara-



tive state of the two countries. Here a case had been stated, and clearly made out, proving that there was a party in this country, whose avowed system aimed at the destruction of all civilized order, the annihilation of parliament, and the subversion of the constitution itself, by the introduction of jacobinism, which had already proved so fatal to France, and at that moment threatened the dissolution of every established government in Europe! Such being the case in this country, it was proposed to prevent the calamitous effects of this dangerous conspiracy, by the adoption of a legal measure, limited in its duration, and which the experience and wisdom of our ancestors had approved, and found highly beneficial. What then was to be compared to this in the situation of France, under the influence of the present ruling power in that country, miscalled a government?—a power which, to support its reprobated, detestable, and presumptuous usurpation, had recourse to every stratagem that fraud, robbery, and injustice could suggest. It was, therefore, unfair to impose any such comparisons upon the house; for, in the present instance, we were doing no more than resisting French crimes, by opposing to them English principles; and between them it would not be said, there could be found the least comparison, analogy, or imitation. The right honourable gentleman had next proceeded, in the climax of his imagination, to augur consequences the most portentous, ominous, and inauspicious, from the arguments of the right honourable gentleman \* who sat near him; and, taking that to be the first step of the ladder which he supposed reared for the destruction of the constitution, seemed dreadfully afraid about the extent to which that reasoning might be carried; and on that point he had produced somewhat of an extraordinary kind of argument, which was, that, because all the measures which had yet been taken had proved ineffectual to check the progress of the evil they had been applied to remedy, we were not therefore to persevere in endeavouring to overcome the evil by the

\* Mr. Windham.

application of means stronger and more efficacious. But here it might be asked, whether, if those measures had not been adopted, and the vigilance of government exerted, the evils complained of might not have been much greater now than they really were? and whether, if no such steps had been taken during the last two years, we should have enjoyed the same tranquillity that had prevailed during that period? The fact was, if these measures had not been adopted, we should have been hurried much faster to the same scenes of mischief which had now been opened to our view, and from the dreadful consequences of which we had been saved by the vigilance of parliament and the exertions of government, assisted by the prevailing opinions of the country.

The right honourable gentleman had then said, that if we dreaded all that our alarms had suggested, and found that the measures adopted last year had not succeeded in checking those parties, we ought not to persevere by more severe measures, when there was reason to think that such measures had been of little avail, and that those of a cooler and more moderate nature would have been more adequate: but to what did the right honourable gentleman mean to apply those mild and moderate remedies? Did he suppose that the progress of a jacobin convention, were it to be once established in this country, was to be stopped, and its consequences avoided by indulgence and concession? or that indulgence and concession were fit to be applied as a remedy to so daring an attempt upon the existence of the constitution? He might wish to preserve the British constitution, but that would be a thing impossible, if these societies met with indulgence or concession. Their own language clearly expressed, that they would make no compromise; and it must be clear that no concession would satisfy them, short of a surrender of the British constitution. It must therefore appear that resistance, and the strongest resistance that could be made, was absolutely necessary, notwithstanding all that had been augured in so prophetic a strain against the adoption of severe measures, even in extreme cases. The right honourable gentleman had



said, "if there are such persons, to be sure you cannot like them ; but never imagine that persecution will get the better of their opinions, whatever they may be." If such toleration of opinions ought to be granted to persons of the description which the members of those societies proved to be, to what did it amount ? It amounted to a toleration of the worst species of anarchy, sedition, and treason. In his idea of persecuting for political opinions, the right honourable gentleman need not suppose that there was any particular intention, by that bill, to go too great a length in that way ; and, once for all, to answer the question of "where are you to stop?" it was not proper that the limit of their remedies should be ever declared, or that they should pronounce that this was the last remedy to which they would have recourse : he would at the same time say, that prosecution, in no instance, ought to extend beyond what the real necessity of the case required ; and the temporary means proposed by the present bill might be supposed the best remedy in the present case.

Mr. Pitt said, he should next come to those points on which the right honourable gentleman seemed to have argued at a much greater length than he thought necessary, viz. the degree of necessity that existed, the proofs of that necessity, and the nature of the remedy applied to the case. Upon these several points, he conceived, the house was already perfectly satisfied ; and he could see no reason why the right honourable gentleman should have introduced into that part of his speech, so much in favour of the right which the people had to meet for legal purposes in a constitutional way, or their right to petition parliament for a reform in the representation, because these were points which had never been disputed, and had no connection whatever with the question before the house. With regard to the policy of such an application to parliament, when that question came regularly before the house last year, he had fully declared his sentiments on that subject, and on a parliamentary reform, and his opinions still remained the same : but surely, no person would presume to say, that there existed the most remote ana-



logy between legal societies for obtaining reform in parliament, with an intention and desire legally and constitutionally to improve the representation, and that convention proposed by the jacobin societies, whose object was the destruction of parliament, and not its improvement. That that was their design, was clearly proved by the authority of their own records : the bulk of them did not even pretend that reform was either their view or their wish ; such a measure was neither in their mouths, nor in their minds ; neither did their actions in any sort correspond with the actions of men who wished well to their country. To give any sanction to them, under the impression that their object was a legal and constitutional reform, was too ridiculous an idea to admit even of a moment's consideration : as well might they talk of giving their sanction to legal conspiracy and legal assassination, as imagine that those societies had any legal or virtuous purpose whatever in their system ! [To corroborate this argument, the Chancellor of the Exchequer read various extracts from the proceedings of the society for constitutional information, and the London corresponding society.] These societies were, he said, the main springs of this destructive system, which called aloud for such immediate and such powerful resistance. What he had read from their own books, proved sufficiently, in his mind, that it was through hypocrisy they pretended their object was a parliamentary reform, and that they used it merely as a pretext or mask for their real and mischievous designs ; and the papers inserted in their report were, in his opinion, a full and complete answer to such gentlemen as endeavoured to confound those men with parliamentary reformers, and served also to refute the charge made by those who had insisted that the report contained no new matter whatever. In one of their proceedings they appointed a committee for the express purpose of watching over the conduct of parliament, with a view to controul any proceeding which might appear to them improper ; and that they were to effect through the organ of a convention, expressing at the same time, that as no redress of grievances could be expected from that quarter, it became their

duty to repel tyranny by the same means by which it was supported. On that point he could not but express his surprise at hearing the same arguments used by that right honourable gentleman which had been used on a former night, respecting the right which existed in the people at large to watch over the proceedings of parliament, and to interfere when any measure was going forward which they might conceive inimical to their interests. What most astonished him was, that any argument of that sort should be offered as a palliation for the conduct of that society; since, after the union with the other in the same system, and for the same objects, they avowedly came to resolutions, that they should not appeal to parliament for redress of their supposed grievances, but were to proceed to acts of authority and controul over the functions of parliament.

With regard to nothing new being contained in the report, it was in itself a matter of indifference, whether the information contained in it was old or new, provided it was considered to substantiate the grounds upon which the alarm had taken place. However, in point of fact, they were not old proofs which it contained; for, until the seizure of the papers, the correspondence with the club at Norwich was never known; and that was one of the most important discoveries that those papers contained, as it had brought to light the general design of assembling their jacobin convention. As to what was known two years ago, could any person say, that these transactions were unconnected with the subsequent and progressive proceedings of those societies, and that they did not form a very material link of that chain of conduct which it was necessary to trace from its first commencement down to the present moment? One part of the report, however, the right honourable gentleman had admitted to be new; that which stated that these societies were preparing to put arms into the hands of those who were to carry their designs into execution. That article of the report had been somewhat curiously objected to, that, not being in the body of the report, but given as a separate article, it was therefore less authentic. In answer to which, he should mention, that that

piece of information was cautiously given, because the committee, at the time their report was made up, had not been able to make so full an inquiry into that matter as the importance of the subject demanded; they, however, were now convinced, that they would very soon be in possession of such information as might lead them to propose to parliament some further measures on that article. Another reason they had for making it a separate article, was, that the full information contained in the report respecting the intended convention, was in their minds sufficient to warrant the proceedings intended to be founded thereon.

As to the propriety of the remedy, without again recurring to the arguments used against persecution for matters of opinion, he would shortly say, the remedy amounted to nothing else than putting a legal restraint upon criminal actions; and the present crime amounted, in his opinion, to a conspiracy of that nature, which was an equal, if not a stronger, reason for the suspension of the *Habeas Corpus* act, than either the cases of invasion or rebellion, to which gentlemen had so frequently alluded. The right honourable gentleman seemed very much to doubt the good effects of the bill, and that it would never attain the object for which it was intended: the opinion of the persons who composed those societies seemed to differ essentially from his, and they considered it in a different point of view; for they had declared the suspension of the *Habeas Corpus* act the very measure which should be the signal for them to assemble their convention, and on that account it became the more necessary for parliament to pass the bill quickly, to prevent them from taking measures to evade its operation.

With regard to the measure being likely to invite the French to invade us, the right honourable gentleman had spoken nobly and boldly on that head, when he said, that he did not fear an invasion, but would not invite one; and in that sentiment he perfectly concurred: but the material difference between them was, that he believed the effect on the French would be quite the reverse from what he supposed, for certainly the sup-



pression of our enemies at home would be no very welcome intelligence to our enemies abroad. But however that might be, with regard to the disaffected persons in this country, whatever their numbers were, it was proper the vigilant exertions of government should equal their activity.

The House divided on Mr. Jekyll's motion of adjournment; which being rejected,

Ayes ..... 33

Noes ..... 183

the bill was read a third time, and passed\*.

### *May 30, 1794.*

MR. FOX, pursuant to the notice he had given, this day submitted to the House a series of resolutions, (fourteen in number) reviewing the past proceedings of the war, and setting forth the measures that ought instantly to be adopted for promoting, on equitable and moderate conditions, a pacification with France.

Mr. Sheridan, in supporting these resolutions, took occasion to comment, in very severe terms, upon the conduct of Administration. He charged them with being the authors of a system of alarm calculated to deceive and insnare the people, and maintained that the traitorous designs, which had been pointed at in the Report of the Secret Committee, were fabulous plots and forged conspiracies, originating solely in the foul imagination of his Majesty's Ministers.

MR. PITT:—

I do not feel it necessary, on the present occasion, or in the present stage of the debate, to trouble the house for any length of time, for the same reason that I had, in the first instance, conceived that it would be unnecessary for me to trouble them at all. The substance of the question, and of the arguments brought in support of it, is, as was stated by the right honourable mover of the resolutions, certainly old. The honourable gentleman†, however, who spoke last, has contrived to introduce a considerable deal of novelty into the latter part of his speech. I will not say that the matter which he thus introduced, was not connected with the question; had it not been

\* This debate, which was conducted with unusual warmth, lasted till three o'clock the following morning (Sunday).

† Mr. Sheridan.

connected with the question, you, Sir, would undoubtedly have called him to order. I could easily, however, account for the principle on which you were restrained from doing so, when I recollect that on a former occasion you stated, that any argument, however bad or absurd, does not therefore become disorderly. It is possible that an argument may have some connection, though it be not such as can evidently be received in the first instance, and certainly it will be allowed, with respect to the honourable gentleman, that he is possessed of such ingenuity as to bring together every argument, however incongruous, that may suit his purpose, and give it an appearance of connection with the question. What then was the amount of his arguments? That you ought to discontinue the war, because it afforded the means of fabricating plots in this country. The honourable gentleman thought proper, without the smallest regard either to probability or decency, to assert, that plots had been fabricated, and that these plots had no foundation except in the foul imagination of ministers. The abuse of that honourable gentleman has been too often repeated to have any degree of novelty with me, or to be entitled to any degree of importance, either with myself, or any other of my honourable friends, who may occasionally happen to be its objects. But I must own, that there is some degree of novelty indeed in this mode of attack against a report originating from twenty-one members, to whose character for honour and integrity I will not do any injury by comparing it with the quarter from which the attack was made——

[Being here called to order by Mr. Courtenay, for an improper and uncalled-for attack upon the character of his honourable friend (Mr. Sheridan), the Speaker interfered, and allowed that the expressions were disorderly, however they might have arisen from the mode of attack which had been irregularly adopted by the honourable gentleman (Mr. Sheridan) in the first instance.

Mr. Sheridan rising to speak, Mr. PITT proceeded:—]

Except the honourable gentleman rises for a motion of order, I certainly, as having been already before the house, am entitled to be heard. [Here Mr. Sheridan sat down.] I beg leave to say, that I must always bow with deference to any interrup-

tion from you, Sir, whose regard to the dignity and impartiality in conducting the business of this house is upon every occasion so evident, and whenever interrupted for any expression that may appear disorderly, and may have escaped me in the heat of debate, I most readily make my apology, where alone it is due, to you and to the house. Still, however, I must be permitted to add, that the language of the honourable gentleman whose observations I was called upon to answer, was neither within the rules of parliamentary debate, nor of parliamentary decency.

I was proceeding, when interrupted, to state, that the honourable gentleman had argued, that the discontinuance of the war would put an end to those proceedings of a committee of this house, which he has chosen to brand with such coarse and indiscriminate censure. The question is not merely, whether his mode of attack is fair and candid with respect to the individuals composing that committee; but how far it is proper to be adopted, when their report has already been received by this house, and been made the foundation of a measure now sanctioned by the three branches of the legislature—the suspension of the *Habeas Corpus* act. The preamble of that measure states the existence of that plot, as recognised from the investigation of a committee, and the inspection of voluminous papers, which the honourable gentleman has chosen to brand as the fabrication of ministers. But why has he introduced this subject, apparently so little connected with the question? In order, as it appears, to give an account of a transaction, of which, I declare, till this night, I knew nothing\*: as little am I acquainted with the dissemina-

\* Mr. Sheridan, in the course of his speech, had complained of certain liberties, which he conceived had been taken with his character as a member of that house.—“Suppose,” continued Mr. Sheridan, “a great magistrate of the city, robed in the ensigns of his office, not lightly over a glass of wine, or after a good dinner, but solemnly and gravely in the court with his brother aldermen, should declare that a member of parliament, by name Mr. Sheridan, would be sent to the Tower within two months, provided the *Habeas Corpus* act were suspended, and should back his assertion



tion of those inflammatory papers, of which so much has been said by the honourable gentleman. I have, indeed, for these few days past, been engaged with the examination of papers, but papers very different from those alluded to by the honourable gentleman. These papers, voluminous in their size, form the records of those societies, whose proceedings have attracted the notice of government. They contain materials of a nature very interesting indeed, and with which this house will speedily be acquainted. When these materials shall be brought forward, it will then appear, whether there is any real ground for alarm, or for supposing the existence of that plot which has been stated: I shall only desire the house to compare what shall appear upon the face of the report of their committee with what has been asserted by the honourable gentleman, as having been made use of by a respectable member of this house \*. I am surprised that it could ever have appeared in any other light than as an expression of levity. The honourable gentleman, however, thinks otherwise. From the serious view in which he has taken it up, it appears that a conspiracy cannot be going abroad, but he immediately takes guilt to himself. If his jealousy be indeed so wakeful, and his fears so easily excited, in all probability the bet which he has mentioned with respect to himself may be a fair speculation.

In one point of view I must indeed thank the honourable gentleman for having introduced the topic of the state of the country, and the existence of plots, however irrelevant it might seem to the subject of debate. However irrelevant it might seem as introduced by him, it is certainly highly in our favour. For if, from the result of the report of your committee, it shall appear that there is ground to suppose that there has existed a

with a bet, and so considerable a bet as one hundred and twenty guineas to six, — would you think this a light or trivial matter? And would not gentlemen suppose that such a magistrate, from his known connexion with administration, had some authority for saying so beyond his own ideas as a private man? It would not be orderly to name the honourable magistrate; but if he be in the house, he probably may be known by a gold chain which he wears."

\* The Lord Mayor.

system in this country, (and indeed no country in Europe has been exempted from its effects) to introduce French principles for French purposes, and by French means; if the same system may be traced all over the continent, and there shall be found to be the most striking coincidence both in the object aimed at, and the means by which it has been prosecuted; if the whole shall be clearly imputable to the present government of France, and be calculated every where to produce the same effects, which we have witnessed in that country, it must then be admitted, that nothing less than the subversion of that jacobin government, which has been contended for by my honourable friend \*, can be adequate to the purposes of the war. The present, indeed, is not a contest for distant, or contingent objects; it is not a contest for acquisition of territory; it is not a contest for power and glory; as little is it carried on merely for any commercial advantage, or any particular form of government; but it is a contest for the security, the tranquillity, and the very existence of Great Britain, connected with that of every established government, and every country in Europe. This is the view of the nature of the war, upon which this house has acted in its former decisions. It is a view confirmed by the experience of every day, and of every hour; it is a view which the events of the present moment have tended still more strongly to impress upon the minds of gentlemen of this house, this moment, which has been chosen of all others in order to induce us to abandon our principles, and reverse our decisions.

I do not think it necessary to comment at length upon the string of resolutions brought forward by the right honourable gentleman†. They are evidently introduced for the express purpose of recording upon the journals of this house the opinions of that right honourable gentleman with respect to the nature, the object, and the probable events of the war — opinions which he has brought forward both in the course of the present, and of the former session. The substance of all his re-

\* Mr. Jenkinson.

† Mr. Fox.

solutions may be reduced to two, to each of which, now that I am upon my legs, I shall feel it necessary to say a very few words. The right honourable gentleman, in a speech more distinguished by its length and ability, than by any additional matter, or novelty of argument, divided the whole subject into three or four periods, in order to prove, that the subversion of the jacobin government was inconsistent with the former professions of this government, and in its own nature impolitic and impracticable. In order to prove his assertion, the right honourable gentleman began with adverting to the professions of neutrality, held out on the part of this country previous to the declarations, and to the negotiations set on foot, in order to secure the continuance of peace. To this part of his argument, the answer of my honourable friend, was so full and satisfactory, as to require on my part no addition. I have only to state, along with him, that it is not every provocation which justifies a war. The French revolution might not, in the first instance, appear to be so great an evil, as it has since evinced itself to be. It might not be discovered to have such pernicious effects as have since unfolded themselves to our view. The extent to which it carries the principle of propagating its doctrines by fire and sword is now, however, no longer a matter of doubt. The principle is rendered still more dangerous by the means which it possesses for carrying it into effect. Can we then be supposed to be pledged to the same line of conduct in the present moment, which in the first instance we might have deemed it prudent to adopt?—In proportion as the extent of the evil discloses itself, does not there arise a necessity for increased means of resistance? The right honourable gentleman stated that even subsequent to the memorable period of the 10th of August, we continued our professions of neutrality, though we thought proper to break off all intercourse with the French nation on account of their conduct to the sovereign. Of the principles upon which that intercourse was broken off, the house have already expressed their decided approbation; and can they then, with regard either to the dignity



of their character, or the consistency of their principles, renew, in a time of war, that intercourse which they thought proper on such solid grounds to break off in time of peace, and at a time too when, I contend, that the attempt to renew such intercourse would be as impotent as it would be disgraceful?

The right honourable gentleman stated, that the objects first held out for the war on the part of this country, were the breach of treaty by the French with respect to the Scheldt, and the views of aggrandizement which they disclosed in seizing upon the territory of the neighbouring powers. So far I admit he has stated justly; but when he says, that all idea of interference with the government of France was entirely disclaimed, he states what is not the fact.—Such an interference, I grant, was not precisely stated; it was, however, referred to even in the first instance. And in proof of this assertion, I refer to the following passage in his Majesty's message, brought down to this house so early as the 28th of January 1793.

“ In the present situation of affairs, his Majesty thinks it indispensably necessary to make a farther augmentation of his forces by sea and land, for maintaining the security and rights of his own dominions, for supporting his allies, and for opposing views of aggrandizement and ambition on the part of France, which would be at all times dangerous to the general interests of Europe; but are particularly so, when connected with the propagation of principles which lead to the violation of the most sacred duties, and are utterly subversive of the peace and order of all civil society.”

Such was the language even then adopted by his Majesty, and re-echoed in the answer of this house to that message. A few days after, came the declaration of war on the part of the French. What were the sentiments I expressly declared in the course of the last session, I refer to the recollection of every member present. A few day previous to the close of last session, the right honourable gentleman came forward with a motion precisely similar in nature and effect to the resolutions

which he has this day proposed to the house. I then stated, that while the existing system continued in France, we could have but little hope of obtaining a peace upon solid and permanent grounds; that, could a peace be obtained, I certainly should not consider the continuance of the system, as itself, an objection. At the same time I expressly assured the house that the prospect of affairs was such as not to afford the smallest ground of rational expectation of our ever being able to obtain such a peace as we could either accept, or, for any length of time, hope to enjoy, while France remained under the influence of jacobin councils, and that the prospect of bringing the war to a conclusion, as well as the security for any engagements which we might form with France, must ultimately depend upon the destruction of those principles, which were hostile to every regular government, and subversive of all good faith. I asserted further, that if an opportunity should occur, in which we might interfere with advantage in the internal government of France, we certainly should avail ourselves of every such opportunity, as an operation of the war. Had I, as the right honourable gentleman has contended, disclaimed all such interference in the present war, I should have done what never has been done in any former war. And I have only to remind the right honourable gentleman, of what, upon a former occasion, was his opinion with respect to an interference, which government found necessary to make in the affairs of Holland. When we attempted to defend that measure upon the principles of justice, he contended that we proved too much, and that, in order to justify it, it was only necessary to shew that it was for the interest of Great Britain. Upon what principle then can he now possibly urge that an interference, admitted in every former war, should become unjustifiable in the present, that commenced on the part of France, with an interference against ourselves?

Having supposed then, that all idea of interference was disclaimed, the right honourable gentleman proceeded to bring forward a charge of inconsistency, from the declaration of Lord Hood, at Toulon, and that afterwards published by his

Majesty, addressed to the people of France. These declarations, I affirm, are perfectly consistent. That of Lord Hood only promises protection to the people of Toulon, so far as he could grant it, without specifying any particular form of government—they chose to pledge themselves to the constitution of 1789. The declaration of his Majesty offers protection to all the people of France who shall approve of an hereditary monarchy. What then do the resolutions, prepared by the right honourable gentleman, call upon you to do?—to counteract all your former sentiments—to abandon those principles to which you have pledged yourselves—to rescind the measures which you have solemnly adopted—and, after having displayed the extent of your resources, and put into the hands of his Majesty means for carrying on the war, to tell him that he shall not avail himself of those means, and abandon every resource, except that of making peace with France. It is to require you, at the end of the session, to make a recantation of all that you have done in every former part of it—to contradict all your former professions, and to renounce opinions formed upon the most serious deliberation, and confirmed by repeated acts. It is worthy of remark, that the gentlemen on the other side, who are so fond of accusing others of inconsistency, take to themselves the credit of supporting the war to a certain period. Beyond that period, they have stated they found it impossible to give it any farther support, though I must observe, looking to their general conduct, if the periods at which they gave it support, and at which they thought necessary to withdraw it, were to be transposed, the difference would be very inconsiderable. What was the period, down to which they take the credit of having given support to the war?—the passing of the French Corps bill. Then it was, it seems, that they first discovered that the present was a war for the purpose of an internal interference in the government of France. But it is of little consequence to this house, what are the opinions of individuals, or what the pretences which they may hold out. It is their business to consider what has been their general line of conduct, and what course they are bound to adopt on the present occasion, from



a regard to the dignity of their character, and the consistency of their measures. In this point of view, they will consider whether they have this night heard any thing to induce them to deviate from these principles, which they adopted on the most mature deliberation. The right honourable gentleman, in order to throw discredit on the object of the war, has had recourse to a confusion of argument. He chuses to confound the subversion of the present jacobin government with the conquest of France, and states that we have in view nothing less than the entire subjugation of that country. He forgets that the objects are entirely different: we have no desire to conquer France; we wish only to free it from a system of tyranny equally oppressive to itself and dangerous to its neighbours; which can, in the first instance, only exist by the misery of its subjects, and menaces in its progress the destruction of every regular government. But he states, as an argument against our success, that the force of that government is in the present moment stronger than ever, while he adds, however, by way of parenthesis, no matter whether by terror or by whatever means. He seems to think that the means by which that power is supported, have nothing to do with the question. I contend that they form the whole; since on those means the permanence and stability of the government must depend. If it is a power acquired by the influence of terror, and supported by a system of coercion, it is neither likely to be solid nor lasting.

Another object which the right honourable gentleman has urged, is, that even if you should succeed in subverting the present government of France, such a measure would be in itself impolitic, and could afford you no prospect of rational advantage. What, says he, would you destroy a government before you have made up your minds what to substitute in its stead? do you consider the consequence of again setting the minds of men adrift, and how can you be sure that the result will be better than what you at present witness? This is exactly an illustration of the mode of argument adopted by the right honourable gentleman, who, consulting neither the policy nor expediency of the particular question, is always addicted

to push his general principles to the extreme. You ought not, says he, to subvert the present form of government, because, if the French are to be left to chuse for themselves, you do not know by what other form it may be succeeded, whether an absolute or a limited monarchy, or a different species of republic. In opposition to this reasoning, we can safely decide from experience of its effects, that any form of government which succeeds the present, founded upon jacobin principles, though not the best, must be comparatively good. But as a reason why we ought not to seek the subversion of this jacobin government, or be apprehensive of danger from its existence, the right honourable gentleman has stated, that it has been found perfectly possible for opposite governments to exist together, without interfering with each other. I grant that this is perfectly possible with respect to any established government, however defective, acting upon certain rules, and from certain principles. But I cannot admit that it is the case with respect to a system such as the present established in France, a system such as never existed before in any country, and to which no analogy can be found in the history of mankind; a system admitting of no modification of its vices, excluding all principles, and bearing in itself the seeds of hostility to every regular government; a system not possessing the means of power for the protection of its subjects, but usurping them for their oppression. Such a system presents no remedy for its vices, or hope of security to its neighbours, but in its entire subversion. On all these grounds, I trust that the policy, consistency, and necessity of a vigorous prosecution of the war, will still appear to remain unimpeached.

I have only a few words to say to that resolution of the right honourable gentleman, which suggests, that we ought to aim at peace by negociation. In desiring us to have recourse to negociation, he contends, that we have at least nothing to apprehend from the experiment, even if it should fail, and that to propose terms can surely be attended with no harm. The answer of my

honourable friend \* to this part of his argument, was so full and satisfactory, as to render it unnecessary for me to add any thing farther. My honourable friend stated, in the clearest manner, the little hope we could have of success in any negotiation from the nature of the jacobin system, and the characters of the present French rulers, and the still less security which we should have for the performance of any engagement into which they might enter. But the question is not merely whether these persons, now at the head of affairs in France, would be disposed to treat with us, or whether we could have any security for any peace which we might make with them? We are to recollect, that while that system, with which we now contend, continues in France, we can have no peace upon any terms short of absolute ruin and dishonour; and that, by an express law of the constitution, any Frenchman who should propose to treat with us, except upon the conditions of abandoning our most sacred principles and our dearest rights, of surrendering our constitution, dethroning our virtuous monarch, and consenting to introduce into this country that horrible system of anarchy which they propose to our imitation, is declared a traitor. What then becomes of the argument of the right honourable gentleman, that, even if we should enter into negotiation, no harm could possibly be attendant upon our failure? Have we not reason to suppose, that by those who avow such principles, the terms which we should propose would most certainly be rejected? And what then would be the consequence? By entering into negotiation we should have dissolved that confederacy, on which alone we can depend for success against the common enemy. To the French we should have given confidence and vigour; and, baffled in our expectations of peace, should ourselves be again obliged to have recourse to war, when war was found to be our only alternative, and when we had deprived ourselves of the means for its vigorous prosecution.

\* Mr. Jenkinson.



The acquisition of the West-India islands, the right honourable gentleman affirmed, was but of little consequence, as to attaining the object of the war—the subversion of the jacobin government of Paris. I grant that it may appear of little consequence as to its immediate effects; but may it not be supposed to have a collateral influence? Is it indeed of little consequence in the first year of the war to cut up their resources, and destroy the sinews of their commerce? Is the injury to their revenue less fatal, though, from the monstrous and gigantic expedients of finance to which they have had recourse, it may not, in the first instance, be perceived? Is it of little consequence to us in the prosecution of a war for which we do not ourselves possess sufficient military force, and in aid of which we must have recourse to our pecuniary resources, thus to procure the means of increasing these resources, by extending our commerce, and opening new sources of industry? When the right honourable gentleman, then, represents the loss of these West-India islands as but little felt, or altogether contemned, by the French, what obviously is the inference? Is it not that the government which can suffer such a limb to be torn from the empire without shrinking, which can view with indifference and unconcern the sinews of its commerce destroyed, and the sources of permanent revenue annihilated, can have but little interest or feeling in common with its subjects? If, indeed, we can suppose that the French government could see the danger of their colonies without fear, and submit to their loss without regret, it would only be a proof that they had become callous from desperation. Yet after the right honourable gentleman has represented these islands as considered but of little consequence by the convention, how does he proceed to argue? He considers them in one respect important, as they may be employed by you as valuable *media* of negotiation—that is, he proposes to you to give up acquisitions which are highly valuable to you, as a bribe to induce those who despise them, to abandon their favourite project.

But if the right honourable gentleman should not succeed in prevailing upon you to adopt any of his resolutions which go to

offer terms of negociation, still he has one resolution of a different nature: he calls upon you, by an explicit declaration, to prescribe the precise form of government, which you mean to insist should be adopted in France. This strange proposition he clothes indeed in elegant language: in that case, says he, you certainly would have fewer friends, but then they would be more sincere. What is the case? that at present there are a great many of different opinions with respect to the form of government which they would wish to see established, but who, equally disapproving of the present horrible system, are prepared to concur with you for its destruction. These, whom it ought to be your object to unite and concentrate, he calls upon you, by this resolution, to alienate and disperse; a resolution too, which goes beyond the line of your policy, inasmuch as your object is the subversion of a system incompatible with your interest and with the security of Europe; and that once effected, the government that shall be deemed most proper to succeed, will then naturally become the object of modification to the different parties. I am the more surprised that such a resolution should have come from the right honourable gentleman, as an honourable friend \* of his has stated as a principle, and it is the only part of his speech in which I can agree with him; "That seldom has any nation laid down a peremptory declaration, from which it has not found it necessary at some time or other to recede." I am astonished, indeed, that the right honourable gentleman, who so much disapproves of all idea of internal interference in the government of another country, should himself, by this resolution, carry the principle so far—to a length greatly beyond the line of our policy, and that object, which by our interference we propose to ourselves. It is not, in fact, more inconsistent with our principles than with his own: you could not adopt it without reprobating those sentiments which have been so often maintained by the right honourable gentleman; nor could he himself vote for it without giving up all his former opinions on the subject. This last resolution, therefore, I cannot deem more admissible than the others: it is not less incongruous in point of policy, than

\* Mr. Sheridan.

the former were repugnant to all those principles with respect to the present contest so solemnly adopted, and so repeatedly sanctioned by this house.

Upon a division, the previous question, which had been moved by Mr. Jenkinson, was carried;

Ayes ..... 208

Noes ..... 57

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*July 10, 1794.*

Mr. Sheridan having moved, "That there be laid before the House an account of monies issued to the King of Prussia, in pursuance of the treaty concluded between his Majesty and the King of Prussia, signed at the Hague the 19th of April 1794; together with an account of the troops which have been employed in concert with his Majesty's troops, in pursuance of that treaty,"

MR. PITT rose to oppose the motion:

He said, that, before he entered into the three great points which the honourable gentleman \* had made the chief topics of discussion, he would apply himself to those inferior matters which had been urged as preliminary to them. The honourable gentleman seemed to express some satisfaction that he had at last had an opportunity of saying a few parting words, and of stating some observations; and at the same time insinuated something blameable in his Majesty's ministers, on account of their supposed inattention to the house, and to their public duty; as they were not found in the house, at its last meeting, discharging that part of their public duty. He begged only to remind the house, that it was very generally understood, that all public business was closed. It was undoubtedly true the house was not prorogued; it was only adjourned, on account of some necessary arrangements made for better conducting the affairs of the executive government; and, in fact, for reasons in

\* Mr. Sheridan.



themselves pretty obvious, and which had been pretty well mixed up with the discussions they had just heard from the honourable gentleman. Unless, therefore, they themselves had felt, from the situation of affairs, that some new measure was necessary to be adopted, (which they did not, as they thought, in their view of the subject, that it would rather tend to embarrass than to improve the country,) they could not very well conceive that any other person had any thing to propose. They did not imagine, till they heard of the honourable gentleman's notice, that it was very likely that he wanted to discuss again any of those subjects to which he had just directed their attention. He thought this was enough to say for himself. As to some gentlemen who were absent, as their seats were vacant, and their situations, as servants of the crown, had not yet commenced, they had sufficient excuse at present. His honourable friend \*, they all knew, was absent by reason of a severe domestic misfortune, which he was sure the honourable gentleman regretted equally with himself.

Having thus explained the reason of the absence of ministers on a former day, Mr. Pitt said, he should very shortly advert to the three distinct points to which the honourable gentleman had alluded; and he should do it the more concisely, because, with regard to two of them, he thought it would be obvious to every gentleman in that house, that it was impossible for him, without the greatest indiscretion, and an entire forgetfulness of every part of his duty, to enter into any discussion.

With regard to one of these points, he had no difficulty in giving a very distinct answer.

The three points were; the object of the war, as directed against France; the conduct of the king of Prussia; and the negociation now pending between this country and the United States of America.

Respecting the two last, he should state the reasons why he should pass them over in profound silence.

\* Mr. Dundas.

With regard to the first, the object of the present war, it was not necessary to say much: but what he had to say, he wished to state as distinctly as he could: and in order to do so, he must beg not to answer the question as the honourable gentleman had put it. He begged not to answer it equivocally, not upon any vague grounds, not upon construction, not upon misrepresentation. He begged to answer the question, What the object of the war was? not from what the honourable member had mistakenly represented it to be, but from what he himself had constantly represented it to have been.

A number of irrelative and desultory observations had been made by the honourable gentleman, who had made up his argument by quoting some parts from one gentleman's speech, and some from another; and also borrowing something from those who were not delivering their own opinion, but were criticising the opinion of others, and putting their own construction upon it. Among other loose assertions, the honourable gentleman had said, the object of the war was the extermination of the government subsisting in France, without explaining whether he applied it personally to those who formed the government of France, or whether it extended to all those who were adherents to that government. Using it equivocally, and to countenance another construction, he said it was a war *usque ad internecionem*;—a phrase which, as far as he recollected, had never been used but by those who opposed the war. If the honourable gentleman meant that the object of the war, as expressed by ministers, was the destruction of the jacobin government in France, he, for his part, would readily admit that it had been distinctly avowed; that it was still distinctly avowed, and could not be receded from; and he would add, that whatever strength ministers might gain from the counsel, as well as from the known respectability and influence of their new associates, their resolutions on this head could acquire no additional force from that circumstance, nor would their determination to pursue that object be more distinctly and firmly adhered to.

The object was neither to be heightened by new grounds of success, nor relinquished from any temporary failures, in the means of its attainment; and was one which he would never depart from, as absolutely necessary to the security and preservation of this country and her allies. It was not a war of extermination, as the honourable gentleman had called it, nor was its object the conquest of France, but the emancipation of that unhappy country; not the destruction of an enemy, but the overthrow of an usurpation hostile to this and every other government in Europe, and destructive, even to the last extremity of ruin, to France itself. It was impossible to forget that this was the object of the war, as distinctly avowed in his Majesty's speech, and recognised by the house in a variety of proceedings, taken after solemn debate and deliberate consideration: no man of common candour could, therefore, misrepresent it. Let the right honourable member suppose that all France was united in support of the present system, yet he would be forced to declare his detestation of it; nor could any argument lead him to believe, that a numerous and enlightened people willingly submitted to the most severe and sanguinary despotism that ever stained the page of history. It was impossible to put an end to this most furious tyranny, without destroying the present government of France.

The manner in which the honourable gentleman had mentioned this country and her allies by the appellation of *despots*, Mr. Pitt remarked, was a mode of speech so exactly copied from the French, that he was even surprised that the honourable gentleman used it, who, though sometimes their apologist, had often been obliged to reprobate their actions. Who were those that the honourable gentleman joined with the French in calling despots?—The regular powers of Europe, Great Britain and her allies, united in one common cause, using the most vigorous endeavours to open to France the means to work its own safety, and for restoring order and prosperity to that distracted country. Let the honourable gentleman understand once more (said he) that that object is not varied, nor that resolution altered; that



there is not a man in his Majesty's councils who has not a firm and unalterable determination to employ every exertion, to use the best means and faculties of the country, in conjunction with his Majesty's allies, to effect that which can alone render peace valuable; I mean, to render it permanent and secure. Let him recollect his own declarations, and the discussion the last day we conversed on this subject. That very object had been avowed in his Majesty's declaration in the course of last summer, in his speech as it appeared in the close of last session, and in his Majesty's speech in the beginning of the present session, and it had been adopted by the house: and, therefore, the answer the honourable gentleman received from me was, that the object is such as has been avowed. I cannot state it more distinctly than formerly. The object of the war has been precisely the same from the beginning.

If, after having been in that house parties to the solemn pledge given to their sovereign to support him in it, a few weeks bad success, the loss of some towns in Flanders, the possession of which had in all wars been the fluctuating and unstable consequence of every temporary advantage, and the short series of those vicissitudes inseparable from warfare, should so unnerve them, and so extinguish every spark of British spirit in their bosoms, as to induce them to abandon all their objects, he should consider himself, and those who honoured him with their support, as fairly chargeable with the most shameful weakness and timidity, and with the meanest dereliction of their duty. An essential point deserving the consideration of the house was, the very different situation in which we stood compared with that of the enemy, and, notwithstanding all their new triumphs, how much more we had gained from them than they had obtained from us.

Mr. Pitt dwelt upon this part of his subject with great earnestness, and asked, whether, considering the circumstances that he had alluded to, the house was to be brought to sacrifice their own best interests, their very existence, and the well-being, order, and good government of all Europe, to the phantoms

that might be attempted to be raised by the interested, or the panics it might suit their purposes to create? Humble though his opinion of himself was, he thought better of his own fortitude, and certainly had a much better opinion of that of the house, than to give way, even for a moment, to such a conception; and he sincerely thanked the honourable gentleman for having given him that day an opportunity of declaring, that if the disappointments which the allied armies had experienced, and the difficulties they had encountered, in the prosecution of the just and honourable war in which they were embarked, had been greater in a tenfold degree than they appeared to be, even from the mist of exaggerated misrepresentations which the honourable gentleman had cast upon it, it could not, in his mind, make an atom of variation, as to the only methods that prudence required them to take for the protection of this realm, and the conservation of that general system of order and tranquillity, which had been long gradually methodising, and moulding the mind of man into a more exalted and happy state of social union.

With regard to the question the honourable gentleman had emphatically asked, "What promise had ministers fulfilled?" he said, he should answer it by another, What promise had they broken? For what promise, indeed, could they break, who had never made any in the way the honourable gentleman would insinuate? The only way it was possible for them to break their promise, was to follow the advice of the honourable gentleman, and relinquish the object of the war; to abandon every engagement with their allies; to forget every debt they owed to society, every trust reposed in them by their sovereign and parliament, and every thing they owed to honour, honesty, or their own reputation. Being on that part of the honourable gentleman's charge, he thought it necessary to remind the house, that he had never, from the beginning of the war, spoken of any expected event with certainty: it was impossible he could; the circumstances of all wars were so variable and sudden, that no prudent man would hazard himself by risking a

decisive opinion beforehand. He had always spoken of the events of the war with extreme and obvious anxiety, accompanied, nevertheless, with all that hope which the state of Great Britain, the relative state of France, and the situation of Europe, well justified; and as he held no language then, either sanguine or over-weening, so he would now say, that the hope which he then entertained was not in the smallest degree diminished. He was yet of opinion, that the powers of Europe had within them strength sufficient to secure their own safety; and he had not so very mean an estimation of their intellects as to suppose, that they would not, to the utmost, exert that power for the protection of every thing that could be held most dear by every friend to civilized society.

On the other two points, Mr. Pitt said, he would not long detain the house.

With regard to the treaty with the king of Prussia, he had only to say, that his Majesty's servants were responsible that nothing should be wanting on their part, for the true and faithful performance of the engagements they had advised his Majesty to enter into. Whether those troops engaged by the subsidiary treaty had been most properly employed in the places where they were actually employed, or whether they might have been employed in another place more beneficially for the common cause, were questions which he would venture to assert there was not a man in that house, who wished well to the operations of the combined armies, and the success of the cause, who would wish to have answered in the midst of a campaign. On that subject, considering all the circumstances of the war, it would be highly improper to insist on a reply, as it could only provoke a discussion which must be mischievous to all the objects we had at stake: on that ground, therefore, he should give it his decided negative.

With respect to the other object, while negotiation was pending with America, he held it to be equally unnecessary and improper to state any circumstance relative to it, at a moment when a person had arrived in this country, entrusted with powers on the part of America, in order to see whether, by friendly



discussion, our differences with that country could be adjusted. The public discussion of that subject at the present moment was most likely to defeat the order and arrangement of the business to the future satisfaction of both countries, and at the same time consistently with the interest of his Majesty's subjects. He should, therefore, say nothing on that subject. He did not know whether the honourable gentleman would, or would not, wave the moving of it. If he did, he should undoubtedly think it his duty to give his negative to the motion, on the grounds he had already stated. As to the general grounds of persevering in the war, notwithstanding the assertions of the honourable gentleman, he did not suspect the sentiments of the house, or of the nation, were changed. If they were not, the question was, what they were to gain by adjourning instead of proroguing parliament? With regard to the campaign, ministers were to carry it on in the manner which might seem most advisable to them, and were responsible to parliament for their conduct in that respect. It did not, therefore, require the sitting of parliament to watch that conduct; neither was it necessary that it should be kept sitting on account of the Prussian subsidy, in order to observe whether the king of Prussia fulfilled the terms of the treaty; and it was least of all necessary that they should continue sitting on account of the affairs with America, since, under the present circumstances, any parliamentary interference on that subject would be highly injudicious and improper. On these several accounts he felt that an address to his Majesty, such as had been moved, would be highly inexpedient and unadvisable, and therefore he should give the motion a decided negative.

Mr. Pitt took notice of what the honourable gentleman had said about the unpopularity of his Majesty's ministers in America. The honourable gentleman had told them, that there was a jacobin party in America, acting on French principles, and promoting French interests. With that jacobin party he hoped the king's ministers were as unpopular, as the honourable member himself was with those who opposed jacobin principles in this country. That the persons professing these jacobin principles were

part of the honourable gentleman's ordinary correspondents, he could not have supposed, unless the honourable gentleman himself had so stated it. The honourable gentleman, however, was not very nice in his choice of correspondents in the western hemisphere, as he had lately shewn. Whether the king's ministers were popular or not in America among the jacobins of that country, signified but little. With jacobins he always expected to be unpopular, both at home and abroad. It was enough for him to know, that the popularity of administration in this country would depend on their stopping the progress of jacobin principles, on opposing them wherever they occurred, and in whatever shape they might be found. To promote impressions unfavourable to the success of the war, and to retrieve, if possible, a small degree of that popularity which had been lost among the honourable member's jacobin friends in America, was pretty clearly the great cause of his motion.

The honourable gentleman had asserted, that the present administration had been vested with greater powers than had been given to any former ministers. What men or money, said the honourable gentleman, had the king's ministers asked, and not received? He made no scruple to admit the fact; the house had been most liberal, certainly, in their grants to his Majesty's ministers; that honourable gentleman, however, had constantly opposed them, as he did every other measure of government. He believed even the ordinary mode of recruiting the army had been made the object rather of severe criticism. In short, there was not one measure of government which had not been favoured with all the heat and eloquence of that honourable gentleman's vehement opposition.

After the first campaign, ministers had done what they thought the most likely to call forth the zeal and energy of the people, in the cause in which we had embarked, by proposing the raising of voluntary corps by public subscription. This had been opposed upon the ground, that it would be destructive to the constitution: the house judged otherwise, and approved the plan: the constitution had survived, and was strengthened by it; the success with which it had been crowned did honour to the zeal, the loyalty, and the gallantry of the nation.

The next measure of importance adopted arose from the consideration that Great Britain, rich in pecuniary resources, should endeavour to draw forth foreign aid, and facilitate the exertions of other powers, according to the ancient system of the country in continental wars. We should, by means of a subsidy, endeavour to increase the efforts made by nations whose military strength exceeded their pecuniary ability. We did so in the case of the Prussian subsidy; but it was reprobated with the same warmth, with the same eloquence, with the same zeal, as the measure adopted to increase the internal defence of the country. After retaining, as far as we could, all the subjects of Great Britain, and those foreign troops, it was natural to think of calling forth, of disciplining, and of rendering regular and effectual, that part of the French nation who had taken refuge in England, and whom we might enable to bear arms, for the purpose of assisting in recovering all those rights that were most dear to them. The demands of ministers on that head, according to the honourable gentleman, had not been refused. They certainly had not, except by the honourable gentleman. Ministers had united all the exertions of Europe to those of the sound part of France, in order to effect the salvation of that country, and to destroy that tyranny which otherwise threatened to overwhelm all civilized society.

None of these measures however, nor yet the object of the war, had so much irritated the honourable gentleman, as a matter to which he had so pointedly alluded; a topic drawn, not from events on the continent, but from events nearer home, and which had obviously made a deep impression on the honourable gentleman's mind. The honourable gentleman asked, What there could be, but a great and pressing necessity, to produce the new arrangements in the present administration? That question he would answer with another, What greater necessity could there exist to faithful subjects of their sovereign, to faithful guardians of the constitution, and sincere lovers of their country, to unite their efforts to preserve the security of the crown, the authority of the parliament, the liberty, the tranquillity, and safety of the nation, than the necessity of the moment? What connection of persons were more likely to serve



the king well, or to defend the constitution wisely and faithfully, than those who had united on the ground of that necessity? What was their object? They were not contending whether this or that description of family were the most likely to compose an administration that would meet the public opinion and forward the king's service; they were not contending with regard to constitutional points, whether this or that legislative measure, whether this or that representation of the people, was or was not to be adopted; they were not then debating what was the best form of government for India; nor discussing what were the merits of a peace made twelve years ago; but they were considering, during the existence of an alarming, disastrous, and unprovoked war, what was the best mode of defending the liberty, the property, and security of every Englishman, by preserving the constitution from the dangers and destruction with which it was threatened. And as they tendered their allegiance, as they tendered their safety, as they cherished the memory of their ancestors who had defended that constitution, or as they looked to the interests of their posterity, they were bound to lay aside every distinction, to remove every obstacle, and to unite the talents, the characters, integrity, and honour, of all honest men who were able to serve their country, upon which depended the present and future safety not only of Great Britain, but of Europe. On these principles they were united; on these principles they would act; and if their exertions should unfortunately fail, and not be crowned with success, they would at least have the consolation of being conscious that every effort had been made that human wisdom could suggest, and that nothing had been wanting on their part towards the attainment of an object, to which there was no one among them that would not have devoted all his faculties, and, if necessary, his life. These were the feelings and sentiments, Mr. Pitt said, which he entertained on this subject; and he was extremely obliged to the honourable member for the opportunity he had given him of stating his sentiments explicitly.

The question was negatived without a division.

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*December 30, 1794.*

DEBATE on the address in answer to his Majesty's most gracious speech \*  
on opening the session.

An amendment to the address being moved by Mr. Wilberforce, "advising his Majesty to order a negotiation for peace on such terms as should be deemed just and reasonable,"

MR. PITT delivered his sentiments to the following effect:

I should not have so much endeavoured, Sir, to have engaged your attention at the present moment, had not a sudden indisposition seized me, which I was apprehensive might, at a later hour, have incapacitated me from entering fully into the

\* " *My Lords and Gentlemen,*

" After the uniform experience which I have had of your zealous regard for the interests of my people, it is a great satisfaction to me to recur to your advice and assistance, at a period which calls for the full exertion of your energy and wisdom.

" Notwithstanding the disappointments and reverses which we have experienced in the course of the last campaign, I retain a firm conviction of the necessity of persisting in a vigorous prosecution of the just and necessary war in which we are engaged.

" You will, I am confident, agree with me, that it is only from firmness and perseverance that we can hope for the restoration of peace on safe and honourable grounds, and for the preservation and permanent security of our dearest interests.

" In considering the situation of our enemies, you will not fail to observe, that the efforts which have led to their successes, and the unexampled means by which alone those efforts could have been supported, have produced among themselves the pernicious effects which were to be expected; and that every thing which has passed in the interior of the country, has shewn the progressive and rapid decay of their resources, and the instability of every part of that violent and unnatural system which is equally ruinous to France, and incompatible with the tranquillity of other nations.

" The States General of the United Provinces have nevertheless been led, by a sense of present difficulties, to enter into negotiations for peace with the party now prevailing in that unhappy country. No established government or independent state can, under the present circumstances, derive real

discussion of a question, upon which I must be supposed to feel most anxious to deliver my sentiments.

I am aware, that there are some gentlemen with whom the original opinions, which they have expressed on the war, pre-

security from such negociations: On our part, they could not be attempted without sacrificing both our honour and safety to an enemy, whose chief animosity is avowedly directed against these kingdoms.

"I have therefore continued to use the most effectual means for the further augmentation of my forces; and I shall omit no opportunity of concerting the operations of the next campaign with such of the powers of Europe as are impressed with the same sense of the necessity of vigour and exertion. I place the fullest reliance on the valour of my forces, and on the affection and public spirit of my people, in whose behalf I am contending, and whose safety and happiness are the objects of my constant solicitude.

"The local importance of Corsica, and the spirited efforts of its inhabitants to deliver themselves from the yoke of France, determined me not to withhold the protection which they sought for; and I have since accepted the crown and sovereignty of that country, according to an instrument, a copy of which I have directed to be laid before you.

"I have great pleasure in informing you, that I have concluded a treaty of amity, commerce, and navigation, with the United States of America, in which it has been my object to remove, as far as possible, all grounds of jealousy and misunderstanding, and to improve an intercourse beneficial to both countries. As soon as the ratifications shall have been exchanged, I will direct a copy of this treaty to be laid before you, in order that you may consider of the propriety of making such provisions as may appear necessary for carrying it into effect.

"I have the greatest satisfaction in announcing to you the happy event of the conclusion of a treaty for the marriage of my son the Prince of Wales, with the Princess Caroline, daughter of the Duke of Brunswick. The constant proofs of your affection for my person and family persuade me, that you will participate in the sentiments I feel on an occasion so interesting to my domestic happiness, and, that you will enable me to make provision for such an establishment, as you may think suitable to the rank and dignity of the heir apparent to the crown of these kingdoms."

*"Gentlemen of the House of Commons,*

"The considerations which prove the necessity of a vigorous prosecution of the war will, I doubt not, induce you to make a timely and ample provision for the several branches of the public service, the estimates for which I have directed to be laid before you. While I regret the necessity of large



vent me from entertaining any hopes of concurrence. But there are other gentlemen, who, having supported the war at its commencement, have been led, by the disastrous events of the campaign, to change their former sentiments, and to withdraw their former support. It is with these gentlemen that I shall consider myself more immediately at issue. And, Sir, I must first make some remarks on the arguments which they have drawn from the words of the address. To this address they say that they cannot give their assent, because it pledges them *never* to make peace with the *republican* government of France. I do not consider that it does so pledge them. It says only, that with a government, such as the present government of France, we cannot treat on terms that can be deemed secure. And, Sir, where does there exist this imperious necessity to sue for peace? Are we sunk down and depressed to such an absence of hope, and to such a want of resources? If we were indeed so calamitously situated—if we were indeed so devoid of hope, and so deprived of resources—if the continuance of the war produced so intolerable a pressure, then, perhaps, we might consent to a change of system. I am ready to confess, that I can conceive an imaginary case of a peace being made with the government of France, even in its republican form; but I will fairly

additional burdens on my subjects, it is a just consolation and satisfaction to me to observe the state of our credit, commerce, and resources, which is the natural result of the continued exertions of industry under the protection of a free and well-regulated government.”

“ *My Lords and Gentlemen,*

“ A just sense of the blessings now so long enjoyed by this country will, I am persuaded, encourage you to make every effort, which can enable you to transmit those blessings unimpaired to your posterity.

“ I entertain a confident hope that, under the protection of Providence, and with a constancy and perseverance on our part, the principles of social order, morality, and religion, will ultimately be successful; and that my faithful people will find their present exertions and sacrifices rewarded by the secure and permanent enjoyment of tranquillity at home, and by the deliverance of Europe from the greatest danger with which it has been threatened since the establishment of civilized society.”

say also, that I have no idea of any peace being secure, unless France return to the monarchical system. That there may, however, be intermediate changes that may give the probability of a peace with that country, even should it continue a republic, I am ready to allow, though I certainly think that the monarchical form of constitution is best for all the countries of Europe, and most calculated to ensure to each of them general and individual happiness. Considering myself, therefore, as I said before, principally at issue with those who now, for the first time, dissent from the prosecution of the war, I am content to deliver my sentiments before I hear the arguments of some gentlemen, who will probably enter into a more full discussion than the subject has yet received.

Sir, the reasons that have induced gentlemen to dissent from the prosecution of the war, seem to have possessed a considerable influence on the manner in which they speak of the justice and necessity of the war at its commencement; and their language is now fainter and feebler than I had reason to expect. Contending, as these gentlemen and I did, with the new and monstrous systems of cruelty, anarchy, and impiety; against those, whose principles trampled upon civilized society, religion, and law—contending, I say, with such a system, I could not have entertained the slightest expectation, that from them would have proceeded such an amendment.

It has pleased inscrutable Providence that this power of France should triumph over every thing that has been opposed to it! but let us not therefore fall without making any efforts to resist it;—let us not sink without measuring its strength. If any thing could make me agree to retire from the contest, it would be the consciousness of not being able to continue it. I would at least have no cause to reproach myself on the retrospect. I would not yield till I could exclaim,

—*Potuit quæ plurima virtus*

*Esse, fuit: toto certatum est corpore regni.*

If, Sir, I have expressed myself with more emotion than is

consistent with the propriety of debate, the particular situation in which I stand, opposing and contesting the opinions of those, with whom I have been, on all occasions, in almost all points fortunate enough to agree, will, I trust, excuse the warmth of my feelings.

The arguments used by my honourable friend, in support of his amendment, may be divided into two classes: The impolicy of continuing the war, and the insecurity of peace. One of the arguments which he uses in support of the impolicy of continuing the war, is grounded on the recent changes that have taken place in France. My right honourable friend's speech was a sufficient answer to that argument. The change that has taken place in France is only the change of an attachment to a name, and not to a substance. Those who have succeeded to the government since the fall of Robespierre, have succeeded to the same sort of government. They adopt the same revolutionary system; and, though they have made a more moderate use of their power than Robespierre, yet they differ from him only about as much as Robespierre did from Brissot, who incited the war against this country. The present government, therefore, deserves no more the name of moderation, than that established by Brissot and his followers, who committed the unprovoked aggression against Great Britain. The system of the present governors has its root in the same unqualified rights of man, the same principles of liberty and equality—principles, by which they flatter the people with the possession of the theoretical rights of man, all of which they vitiate and violate in practice. The mild principles of our government are a standing reproach to theirs, which are as intolerant as the rankest popish bigotry. Their pride and ambition lead them not so much to conquer, as to carry desolation and destruction into all the governments of Europe. Have we any right, therefore, to suppose that victory and triumph can produce so great a change in their detestable principles, or that success is such a corrective of all those vicious qualities that pervade their principles and their practice?

Do the gentlemen who now desert the war, expect that a



peace can be obtained, of such a nature, as has been so well described by my honourable friend \*? Do they hope for a free and useful commerce? Do they expect that the armies on both sides will be disbanded, and the fleets be called home? Do they mean to put an end to the traitorous correspondence act? I believe not. I can easily suppose that those gentlemen who, have, in an early part of the evening, so decidedly given their opinion with respect to the late trials, and who have supposed all the persons in this country to be so pure, as not even to be infected by contact with jacobin principles, would foresee no danger from a French alliance, and would look forward with satisfaction to the consequences of such a measure. But such is not the case with my honourable friends, who even, in such an event, talked of the necessity of additional precautions, in order to guard the dignity of the crown, and preserve the tranquillity of the country. What then would be the rational prospect of advantage to this country from a peace with an enraged enemy, in which there could exist no confidence on either side, but which must necessarily give rise to a state of jealousy, suspicion, and constant armament? How long would this state of trouble or repose last? How will you come to the contest when it is renewed? If you disband your armies, if you diminish your force, you will then put an end to that machine which, under the two first years of a war, can barely be said to have been raised to a point high enough to try the strength of the country. Disband your force, and see if the same means and the same period can raise it again to the same point. You will then be opposed in another war with a diminished military power to an enemy, who may have found it as difficult to disband his armies, as you would find it difficult to collect fresh forces. They will again be prepared to start with the same gigantic resources, deriving fresh confidence from the disposition which you had shewn to peace, and new vigour from the interval which had been afforded to hostilities. But

\* Mr. Canning.

will that be all? What assistance can you expect from the continental powers, if you dissolve the confederacy? And can you expect to assemble such a confederacy again? Suppose the enemy made an attack upon Holland, Prussia, Austria, Spain, and the states of Italy, or all or each of these; on what grounds, I would ask, could you rouse the spirit, or raise the vigour of this country again, when, from a sense of your inferiority, you have before given up the contest at a period when the confederacy was at its height? On the event of this night's debate, may depend what shall be your future situation with respect to your allies. If you do not now proclaim your weakness, if you do not renounce your prospects, you have still great hopes from the alliance of Europe. Prussia, Austria, Spain, and the States of Italy, are yet in such a situation that their assistance may be looked to in carrying on the contest.

The honourable gentlemen who supported the amendment, disclaimed the language of fear; they said they knew what Great Britain could do, if once it was roused. What then is to be inferred from all their former professions? Is this a business, in which, after all, we were not serious? Is this cause, which has been admitted to involve not only the most important interests of Great Britain, but the safety of Europe and the order of society, not considered to be of such a nature as requires all the energies of the country? What then is the greater necessity to which they looked? what the occasion on which they deemed that they could more worthily employ their efforts? If we should dissolve the powerful confederacy with which we are now united, could we hope again to bring it back at our summons? and shall we not, in the case of a fresh rupture, be exposed alone to the fury of France, without the smallest prospect of assistance from any other quarter? Besides, I think I shall shew you that you are desired to relinquish the conflict, at a time when all the national and artificial resources of your enemy are verging to a rapid dissolution.

I must now take notice of a speculation which has been

indulged—that if you withdraw, France will return to some more moderate system of government. I ask whether we ought to put ourselves in such a situation of hazard, which, if decided against us, would involve us in much greater calamities than we have yet experienced, and would reduce us to a situation in which we should be without means and without resources?

When it is said, therefore, that a peace will have the effect to overthrow the government of France, the proposition is by no means clear; the probability is much greater, that the persons now at the head of the government, will, in order to continue their own power, (and in France, it is to be recollected, that the continuance of their power is connected with that of their lives, so that, in addition to the incentives of ambition, they have the all-powerful motive of self-preservation,) be induced to continue the same system of measures that now prevails. Obligated as they would be to recall a numerous army from the frontiers, will the troops of whom it was composed, after having tasted the sweets of plunder and the licence of the field, be contented to return to the peaceful occupations of industry? Will they not, in order to amuse their daring spirit, and divert from themselves the effects of their turbulence, be compelled to find them some employment? And what is the employment to which they will most naturally direct their first attention? They will employ them to crush all the remains of courage, loyalty, and piety, that are yet to be found in France, and extinguish all that gallant and unhappy party, from whose co-operation we may promise ourselves, at any future period, to derive advantage. What else can be expected from those Moderates, who, though assuming that appellation, have, in succeeding to the party of Robespierre, only established themselves on a new throne of terror? Thus the peace which is in the present instance proposed, as the means of safety, will ultimately only operate to ensure the work of destruction.

This being my feeling, my objection to asking for peace is,



that peace, under the present circumstances, is *not desirable*, unless you can shew that the pressure is greater than, as I shall prove to you from a comparative view of the situation and resources of the two countries, it is.

But this is but a small part of my objections to the measure. My next objection is, that my honourable friend has not told us what sort of peace we are to have: unless, therefore, they state this, I say, that they would reduce us to a gratuitous loss of honour, and an unnecessary despair. On the kind of peace we might obtain, I will ask my honourable friend, whether he will say that we ought to leave the Austrian Netherlands in the possession of the French? — He will not say so.

I have heard it stated in passing, that the ground of war has been done away by the Dutch negotiation for peace. However paradoxical it may appear, I assert that the safety of Holland, even if she do make peace, depends on our being at war; for if both countries were at peace, then France would be left without restraint. Who that looks to the proceedings of the Convention, does not see that it is their policy, on every occasion, to keep up their arrogant and menacing system, and to hold a high tone of superiority with respect to all other nations? By these means they have contrived to cherish that spirit of enthusiasm among the people, which has enabled them to make such extraordinary exertions, and on which they depend for the continuance of their power. But who, I would ask, will say that France will make peace on terms, I will not make use of the word moderation, but of concession, when you make peace from a confession of her superiority? And this naturally leads me to an assertion made use of by me during the last session, (an assertion not accurately alluded to by an honourable baronet\*), relative to the decree of the national convention of the 13th of April, which states, that the preliminary of peace must be a recognition of the unity and indivisibility of the republic, on the terms of equality;—a decree which has neither been re-

\* Sir Richard Hill.

pealed nor modified, and which, if you make peace during its existence, would sign the dissolution of your parliaments and of your present system of civil society.

Again, I say, that if this were only an ordinary war, and if after two years you had gained the West-India islands as an indemnification, and had been convinced of the strength of your own resources, and that the means of the enemy were decaying, would you consent to make concessions in order to obtain peace? You received the West-India colonies into your protection; will you then give them back to a system, under which they can have no protection? I say we cannot do this without being convinced that the further continuance of the war could only produce misfortune, misery, and ruin. Will you add something more terrific to the colonies than all the horrors of that miserable trade which has peopled those miserable colonies?

Before too you made such a surrender, there is another question to be considered: no less than whether you would afford to the French an unresisted opportunity of working upon the unfortunate system that now prevails in that country, and introducing their government of anarchy, the horrors of which are even more dreadful than those of slavery. To those who have in common deplored the miseries of the unfortunate negroes, it must appear astonishing, that any proposition likely to be attended with such consequences, could ever enter into the mind of my honourable friend \*. Besides, it is impossible to ascertain what a wide-spread circle of calamity the adoption of this proposition may produce. If once the principles of jacobinism should obtain a footing in the French West-India islands, could we hope that our own would be safe from the contagion? If it has been found scarcely possible to shut out the infection of these principles from the well-tempered, and variously blended orders of society which subsist in this country, where a principle of subordination runs through all the

\* Mr. Wilberforce.

ranks of society, and all are united by a reciprocity of connexion and interest, what may be expected to be their effects operating upon the deplorable system pervading that quarter? It would be giving up your own colonies speedily to be devoted to all the horrors of anarchy and devastation.

Such would be the *status quo*. That the *status quo* would probably not be accepted, I have before argued. Will the country, therefore, consign itself, if not to the language, at least to the posture, of supplication?

With respect to our situation, I have not heard it so fully stated as it is my intention to do. Of the last campaign I shall not be suspected of a wish to conceal the disasters, to deny the defeats, or to disallow the bad effects of the wounds inflicted on the two great military powers of Europe. But can I forget what the energies and perseverance of Britons have effected in former wars? or that constancy from a point of honour in greater difficulties has at length produced the object at which it aimed?

Will any man say, that the bare event of military disasters, and territories taken, is a fair way of weighing the resources of the belligerent powers? No, not in any wars, and least of all in this, as far as it relates to this country. All wars depend now on the finances of the nations engaged in them. This observation particularly applies to the present war. The balance of territorial acquisitions and pecuniary resources is in our favour; and I am not afraid to assert, that, putting together what has been lost in territory and what has been spent in money, yet with a view to resources, what has been lost by France is more in point of permanent value and present means than the losses of all the allies composed together.

What, let me ask, are the resources of France? They exist by means as extraordinary as the events they have brought about—their pecuniary expenses are beyond any thing ever known—and, supported by requisition of person, life, and property, they depend entirely upon terror—every thing that weakens that system, weakens their means, and as the



adoption of moderation saps it on one side, so the perseverance in attack cannot but pull it down on the other—take every part of it, one by one, view their expenditure, and then see, whether terror is not the instrument by which they have raised their extraordinary supplies, and obtained all their unexampled successes.

Let us enter into a view of the actual expenditure of France. This expenditure, since the revolution, has amounted to the enormous sum of four hundred and eighty millions, spent since the commencement of the war. Three hundred and twenty millions have been the price of the efforts that have enabled them to wrest from the allies those territories, which are now in their possession. What your expenses have been during the same period, I need not state. I ask now, whether it is likely that France will see you exhausted first? I think not. But it may be said, that what the French have spent, proves what they can spend. To this I reply, have they been enabled to bear this expenditure, by the increase of their revenue, or by any of the ordinary means of France? No: but by the creation of an unlimited paper credit. I desire gentlemen to look at all the debates of the national convention, and they will find that all the deputies agree in this point—that they cannot increase the emission of the paper-money without ruin, and that the miseries arising from this system, aggravate all the calamities of the country. Many persons at first imagined that assignats must have stopped early in 1793. The fact undoubtedly was, that, previously to that period, it was thought the emission was greater than France could bear, and that no further creation could take place without producing a depreciation on the value of assignats, and an immoderate increase in the price of provisions. The whole circulating medium of France at the highest, was 90,000,000 sterling. In August 1793, assignats existed to the amount of 140 millions; commerce was then declining; agriculture was discouraged; population checked; a forced loan of 40 millions was adopted on the idea, that to the amount of 130 millions they could not main-

tain assignats in circulation ; as early as May or June, assignats had lost nearly half their value. A louis in specie soon afterwards produced 144 livres ; then it was that the system of terror commenced, and that a system of credit was begun, which had its foundation in fear.

It may be asked, could any man have imagined that such a plan would have been resorted to ? That it was resorted to — that it succeeded, has been proved. Let us look to the principles of it. There was a law which compelled every man to take at par, that which was worth only one sixth of the sum for which it was taken : a law for the *maximum* of the price of all commodities : a law by which no person was permitted to renounce his occupation, under the penalty of twenty years imprisonment. But you will tell me, that this proves how unlimited the powers and resources of the French are. My reply is, that such a system could neither be undertaken nor succeed but by means which could not last. I will not detain you by detail, but merely mention the other means of terror : the constant activity of the guillotine ; the ferocious despotism of the deputies on missions. In addition to all the other engines of torture, Cambon, the mouth of the convention in matters of finance, tells us, that, in every district, there were revolutionary committees to watch the execution of the decrees of the convention, and to enable the convention to seize the spoil of the people ; the pay of these committees amounted annually to 26 millions sterling. I say this standing army of revolutionary committees is a mean adequate to produce so mighty an end.

Let us add now a new creation of assignats of 130 millions, which increased the total to 260 millions. Will any man say, that though the system of terror is done away, the effects can remain ? When the system of terror was at an end, the *maximum* ceased to be observed ; assignats were then converted into money, and hence the discount became enormous. The fall of Robespierre took place in July ; three months afterwards, the discount was 3-4ths per cent. or 75 on the 100. I have even the

authority of Tallien for saying that the French cannot maintain their assignats, without contracting their expenses and diminishing their forces. And it should be recollected this has been their only resource. Is it then too much to say, their resources are nearly at an end? It is this unlimited power which the French convention have assumed to purchase or to seize all property, as suited their purposes, that accounts for the stupendous scale of operations which they have been enabled to pursue. This circumstance completely solves the phenomenon, which otherwise would appear so inexplicable, and is adequate to all those miraculous effects which have attended the progress of the French revolution, and which seemed to baffle all reasoning, as much as they have exceeded all human expectation. In all these circumstances we have sufficient inducements to carry on the war, if not with the certainty of faith, yet at least with the confidence of expectation;—a war, the immediate termination of which must be attended with certain evil, and the prosecution of which, under the present circumstances, is at least not without great probable hope.

If we look to the situation of France, they are now attempting to have recourse to a milder and more moderate system,—a system which will only deprive them of those prodigious energies, which they have hitherto exerted with such astonishing effect; but they no longer indeed possess the same means, and cannot therefore be expected to display the same exertions. Will it be possible for them all at once to restore the farmer to the occupations of agriculture, and the merchant to the pursuits of commerce, and to replace, in an instant, the devastations of war and plunder, by the arts of peace, and the exertions of industry? It will require years of tranquillity to restore them to the enjoyment of those ordinary resources, which they possessed previous to the commencement of the present destructive war—resources which they can no longer employ. For even could it be supposed that Robespierre were raised from the dead, they would no longer be qualified to display the same energies which, under his administration, were called forth by the influence of a system of terror; the means by which these



exertions have been supplied, are now exhausted. Where can they possibly resort for fresh supplies? Can it be supposed, that when the forced loan failed at the time it was attempted, it can again be tried and succeed in a time much more unfavourable to it, when the system of terror is almost dissolved?

The question then is — have we, under the present circumstances, the prospect of being able to bring as great a force into the field, as will require from the French the same degree of exertion which has been necessary in the former campaigns? Even let it be supposed that Holland should fall, and that circumstances should be such that we can no longer look for assistance from the court of Berlin, yet I see no reason to believe that, in the next campaign, we cannot increase the British forces on the continent to an amount that shall nearly supply the deficiency of Prussian troops, and act with more effect. Other powers look with attention and anxiety on this night's debate. If you afford to those powers the means of making large exertions, you will oblige France to make efforts to which she is now unequal. If you act with spirit, I see no reason why the powers of Italy and Spain may not make a diversion, and thereby accomplish the important purpose I have before stated — a purpose, in the accomplishment of which, the happiness, almost the existence of Europe, entirely rests.

The amendment was rejected;

Ayes ..... 73

Noes ..... 246

and the original address was then agreed to.

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### *January 21, 1795.*

THE House having resolved itself into a Committee of Supply, Mr. Hobart in the chair, the estimates of the army were laid before them.

On the first resolution being put, "That a number of land forces, amounting to 119,380 men, including 3,832 invalids, be employed for the service of the year 1795,"

Mr. Hussey moved as an amendment to the motion, "That the chairman do leave the chair and report progress."

After Mr. Fox had spoken, and in terms of great severity reprobated the measures of Administration, in the conduct of the war,

MR. PITT, who had previously expressed his disapprobation of the proposed amendment, again rose :

He said, the committee would not be surprised, if he solicited their attention for a few minutes. The right honourable gentleman †, who had just sat down, had, in every part of his speech, most completely misrepresented him, and, in many instances, in a manner so gross and palpable, that it must have been obvious to every gentleman in the house. In order to detect these various misrepresentations, it would be necessary to follow the right honourable gentleman almost through the whole of his speech ; and when they were once taken away, all the charges so triumphantly advanced would sink to the ground. In the first place, the right honourable gentleman charged him with having called for the confidence of the house, as a preparatory step to their granting the supplies that had been moved for. Not one word that could be tortured into such a meaning, had dropped from him during the debate. It was the exigencies of the state that called for these extraordinary supplies ; it was upon the estimates laid upon the table that the house were to found their vote, and not upon any unusual confidence in ministers. Whether or no the house acted wisely in placing, not a blind and unlimited, but a just and constitutional confidence in ministers, would be manifested by the event.

But what was the confidence which he had expressed, and which he had called upon the house to feel ? It was a confidence that, in a contest so momentous as the present, all the innate spirit and vigour of this country would burst forth into action. It was a confidence in the firmness, the zeal, and ardour of the people, in the skill, in the courage, in the perseverance of our armies and of our fleets. It was a confidence in the industry, in the manufactures, in the commerce, in the increasing resources of this country — resources, not diminish-

ed by war, but which seemed to increase in proportion to our necessities. It was a confidence founded upon the credit of this country, unimpaired by war, superior to temporary attacks, and fully able to sustain a loan as large as the necessities of the state had called for. It was upon these general grounds combined that he had expressed his confidence, and surely they were sufficient to inspire it. If to place reliance upon such grounds as these was folly,—if to proclaim that reliance was arrogance, of both he was guilty. He trusted that all the attempts of the right honourable gentleman to deceive the house in that respect would be vain. He stated under a general proposition under the title of confidence, what was applicable in a qualified sense to particular considerations, and had nothing to do with any confidence which any minister might think fit to ask, or any parliament should think wise to grant; it was not an attempt which any person feeling manfully on the subject would be induced to make, and was unworthy of the right honourable gentleman who made it; it could be consistent only with a disposition to damp the ardour and to fetter the exertions of the people of this country. This was the more extraordinary, as that gentleman had already pledged himself to a declaration in that house, that the greatest exertions are necessary at this time on the part of his country. But when he had exposed all the right honourable gentleman's misrepresentations, he would leave it to the house to determine to whom the charge of arrogance was most applicable.

The right honourable gentleman had next charged him with levity, in speaking of the events of the war: whether he had talked lightly of them or not, he submitted to the recollection of the house; and to the same tribunal he would leave it to decide whether, in treating of the misfortunes of the war, the right honourable gentleman, speaking in a tone of exultation, coupled with an affected lamentation, had or had not displayed a degree of triumph which the detail of our misfortunes was but ill calculated to inspire. But in what manner had he treated them with levity? Had he attempted to conceal or to



deny any part of our ill success ? On the contrary, he had, in the most explicit terms, acknowledged our want of success in various particulars. But what followed from those temporary calamities ? That we should give up the contest in despair ; that we should humble ourselves before the enemy of mankind ? No ; it should induce the people to redouble their energy, and to call forth all their force in defence of their country. He was ready to admit that the situation of the country at present was such as created in his mind a reasonable degree of alarm, but it was an alarm rather at possible than at probable events. It was an alarm such as every man must feel when engaged in a doubtful contest ; but it was a feeling very different indeed from dismay or despair, with which neither the exaggerated successes of the enemy, nor the pressure of temporary misfortune, could inspire him.

The right honourable gentleman had then proceeded to charge him with having said, that it was a fashion to call this war disastrous. It was true he had used that expression. It was a fashion with a set of people in this country, to represent every event which happened, as a misfortune to us. But the right honourable gentleman had gone farther, and, besides terming the war unfortunate, he had called it disgraceful. And gentlemen on the other side charged ministers with the whole of the disgrace, and with being the authors of all the calamity that had hitherto attended it, and then desired them to put as much blame as they were able on the generals who commanded the troops.

This, as far as it was a matter of advice, he did not thank the honourable gentleman for, and was what he would not follow. That we had in many instances failed, he had already admitted ; but that in any one instance we had incurred disgrace, he positively denied. Whatever might be the event of this war, whether favourable to England or not, the skill and bravery of her forces by sea and land would shine in the page of history ; they had even added to their former character. In fact, our army never stood higher in point of military glory, for skill, valour, and perseverance, and, until lately, they had been

successful in every instance. He wished to ask, whether this war had been so uniformly unfortunate as it was the fashion to represent it? Look to the naval war, does that afford matter of despair? Look to the war out of Europe, has that been uniformly unfortunate?—In both we have the most solid ground of exultation. Look at the pecuniary resources, at the credit, at the commerce of the country, and the balance is infinitely in our favour.—These were the reasons why he had complained of that fashion of dwelling with a kind of malignant satisfaction upon the calamities of the country, and applying the coarse epithet “disgraceful” to the war. It was not his intention to enter in detail into all the operations of our forces last campaign. as that was not exactly the proper time for such investigation. It was true, that when the house was considering the army estimates, it was not irregular to animadvert upon the operations of the army. Indeed, there were few points brought under the consideration of the house, in which gentlemen might not, if they thought proper, find an opportunity of throwing out invectives against ministers. But if he were even to go the length of admitting that every assertion of the right honourable gentleman was founded in fact, and that all his inferences were justly and correctly drawn from those facts, still, as far as related to the question then before the house, his arguments had no kind of application to it. If the right honourable gentleman was really serious in thinking that the ministers were so stupid, so utterly incapable of conducting the affairs of this nation, as he had represented—if it was true, that every failure which we have experienced during the war, was attributable to ministers—if all this was true, what followed? To refuse the necessary supplies, and that we were to have no army!!—for that was the question before the house. If the house should be convinced that ministers had acted improvidently and negligently, did it therefore follow that all our exertions should stop, and that we should throw ourselves upon the mercy of our enemy?

He believed, however, that the object of the right honourable gentleman was extremely different:—but perhaps he felt a degree

of delicacy in stating it. He would relieve his delicacy, and state it for him. His purpose, in endeavouring thus to overwhelm ministers with charges, was to displace them—this was his grand object ; but the right honourable gentleman need not have felt so much delicacy upon this subject. If he could prove, to the satisfaction of the house, that those who were now in his Majesty's councils are utterly incapable of directing the affairs of this country, let him do it. Let him propose an address to the throne, praying his Majesty to dismiss his present servants, as being wholly unfit for their situation. His Majesty, upon such an address, would certainly comply with its request. But even then the purpose of the honourable gentleman would not be answered, for he could not succeed to office unless he was able to convince that house—unless he was able to satisfy the people of England, that the more powerful, and consequently the more dangerous the enemy became, the less we should prepare to resist them ;—that the more their resources increased, the more we should decrease ours ;—that the moment when the enemy was flushed with the insolence of conquest, was precisely the moment in which we should sue for peace : unless the right honourable gentleman could satisfy the house and the country of all these facts, he would derive no benefit by driving the present administration from their places, for he would not succeed them. If, on the other hand, he could do so, then his attack on ministers ought to come in a shape different from what it had at present ; and if such an attack was to come at all, it might as well come from that right honourable gentleman as any other member of parliament.

But what were the points of proof of the deficiency in the administration ? And what were the charges which had been brought against ministers by the right honourable gentleman, and by the honourable officer \* who preceded him ? The first subject of charge was relative to the expedition undertaken by Sir Charles Grey, and Sir John Jervis, to the West Indies. It was said, that the forces allotted to that expedition were not ade-

\* General Tarleton.



quate to the difficulty of the undertaking; and it was also stated, that 10,000 men were promised, but that part of the troops destined for that service had been stolen from the officer who commanded that expedition. This mode of reasoning was as curious as it was new. It was founded upon a supposition, that whenever a body of troops were put under the command of an officer for any particular purpose, they became as it were the property of that officer; and if the exigency of affairs should induce the executive government to employ a part of those troops in another service, then the troops so taken are to be considered as stolen from the officer under whom they were originally placed! It was certainly true, that a part of the troops originally intended for the West Indies had been withdrawn, for the purpose of an expedition, which, from the posture of affairs at that time, was likely soon to take place, and which, if it could have been carried into effect, would, in all probability, have been attended with very beneficial consequences:—he meant the expedition which was then in agitation against the coast of France. That expedition did not take place, from circumstances which ministers could neither foresee nor prevent—Men could not command events; they could only judge from probabilities, and act according to the dictates of their reason.

But when ministers were accused for sending a force to the West Indies utterly inadequate to the object, gentlemen should recollect what was the result of that expedition. It succeeded in every part. The force employed had consequently been decided to have been adequate to the service, as every thing had been done which had at any time been in contemplation of government. He did not wish to detract from the merit of the officers who commanded upon that occasion; he was convinced that it was to their superior skill and indefatigable perseverance that the conquests were in a great degree to be attributed; they had done signal services to their country; and had acquired the utmost honour for themselves. All he asked of the candour of gentlemen was, that when an expedition had been so com-

pletely successful, they would not accuse ministers of having sent an insufficient force, when it was undeniable that the force sent had achieved its object. With respect to the other charge, of not having taken any measures to send out succours to those islands—here again, he contended, ministers were not entitled to blame ; every possible exertion had been made to send out supplies to the West Indies ; they had in some instances been retarded, but from causes which could not be prevented.

The right honourable gentleman then adverted to the campaign in Flanders, and endeavoured, with much ingenuity, to place administration in a dilemma ; but there was more ingenuity than justice in the argument, there not having been any mismanagement in the administration, nor in the officers or troops. The losses which we had met with arose from a chain of concurring causes and unavoidable accidents, each depending upon its own nice and particular nature, but which were neither to be avoided nor foreseen, many of them such as could not reasonably be conjectured before they happened, the highest degree of probability being, that the events would have happened the other way ; and to impute them to administration was just as wise as to impute to them the present severe frost. The honourable gentleman first of all supposes that all our allies have, in every instance, acted up to their engagements and to our expectations: he supposes that in every one of the operations upon the continent there was the most perfect unanimity ; that every one of the generals conducted themselves in a way to set military criticism at defiance. Then, says the right honourable gentleman, triumphantly, if with such exertions as these you have failed, how can you hope to be more successful in future? The right honourable gentleman immediately turns short round, and describes the picture in the other extreme. He supposes a total want of co-operation among the allies—he supposes that all the plans on the continent have been undertaken without judgment, and conducted without energy ; and then he asks what reason we have to expect that our exertions will be

more ably or more effectually conducted in future? If either of the positions of the honourable gentleman was justified by the fact, there might be some difficulty in denying his inferences—But it seemed never to occur to him that there was a medium between the two extremes, which came to the real truth of the case. There certainly was much to lament, something to censure, but nothing to deprive us of hope. That some of our allies had not in every particular answered our expectations, he was ready to admit now—he had never denied it:—perhaps some of our allies, the most nearly connected with us in point of interest, were the most liable to this observation. But the hour when that unhappy people were exposed to every calamity to which the success of a furious enemy could make them liable, was not the proper time for complaint. His object was not to accuse the fallen, but to shew that the charges advanced against the government were without foundation.

It was not sufficient, in order to attach guilt upon ministers, to shew that the allies were unfortunate in Flanders, or that Holland had fallen a sacrifice to the enemy; it must be proved that it was owing to the want of attention, to the breach of faith, or to the supineness of the English government. In what one of these particulars could any charge be made? Did not England adhere scrupulously to her treaties? Did she not act vigorously in the common cause? Did she not encourage the allies by her example, as well as by exhortation? Throughout the whole war, the faith and honour of England had been kept inviolate.

He had been accused of speaking with levity upon the subject of the war. He felt for the misfortunes of his country, as a man and as an Englishman, but he could take no shame to himself, for misfortunes which he had done every thing in his power to prevent, nor pretend to feel contrition where there was no real cause for repentance.

The next ground of charge chosen by the right honourable gentleman, was rather of a singular nature: he stated it as a matter of accusation against his Majesty's ministers, that the



English army had not been withdrawn from the continent sooner. But surely the right honourable gentleman could not be serious in this part of his charge; or, did he mean that as a specimen of the manner in which he would treat an ally? Would it have been consistent with that good faith, which it is the boast of England always to have kept, to have abandoned our allies on the approach of danger? Would the right honourable gentleman have advised us to have withdrawn our forces, while the frontier was defensible? "But (says the right honourable gentleman), when you found the Dutch were negotiating for a peace, you might have secured the retreat of your army." Sir, said Mr. Pitt, if we wished them to obtain an honourable peace, should we have taken the proper steps to obtain it for them by withdrawing our army, and leaving them to the *tender mercies* of the French? It was to her ill-judged confidence in the faith of France, that Holland might in some degree attribute her destruction: On that faith it was that the people of England were recommended by the honourable gentleman and his friends to place implicit reliance. Were these the principles upon which the honourable gentleman would come into administration? would he lay it down that we should withdraw our support from our allies the moment our assistance became critically necessary? Would he negotiate a peace with France for this country, as he seems to think it to have been negotiated for Holland, by throwing ourselves entirely on the mercy of the enemy, and commencing the negotiation, by depriving ourselves of the means of resistance? Was there any alternative as to the conduct this country was to have adopted, with regard to Holland, provided it was understood as a fixed principle, that the faith of England ought never to be violated? Or would the honourable gentleman undertake to point out the precise moment at which the danger of our ally became so imminent that we should be justified in considering our contracts as dissolved? It could not be supposed that he was indifferent as to the fate of the gallant army on the continent; their conduct was above all the feeble praise he could give it; their exertions in

the defence of Holland had exceeded even the most illustrious examples; and he felt infinite satisfaction in the hope they were now in a place of safety and of comparative rest. In the general anxiety of the honourable gentleman to censure ministers, every public calamity is attributed to them; even the severity of the season is brought forward as a crime against them. But he would venture to assert, without the fear of being contradicted by any military man, that, had not the hand of God rendered the season so uncommonly severe, the force employed by England to defend Holland would have been found adequate to the purpose.

Mr. Pitt concluded with saying, he had avoided entering at large into any of the various topics upon which he had touched in the course of his reply, because the time would come when they might be more properly investigated; he had been led to take this general view of the question, to shew the total want of foundation in the charge brought against administration.

The amendment was negatived, and the original resolution passed without a division.

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*January 26, 1795.*

On a motion by Mr. Grey, "That it is the opinion of this House, that the existence of the present government of France ought not to be considered as precluding, at this time, a negociation for peace,"—

MR. PITT expressed himself extremely desirous of taking the earliest opportunity to deliver his sentiments on the present important question. Before, however, he stated the grounds of his objection to the resolution moved by the honourable gentleman, and before he proposed the amendment, which he meant to submit to the house, he was anxious that they might be fully in possession, both of the repeated declarations of his Majesty, and the sentiments that had been expressed by parliament on former occasions. For this purpose, he desired the clerk to read a

passage from his Majesty's speech on the 21st of January 1794, and the answer of the house; and likewise part of the declaration of the 29th of October 1793, and the declaration of the 20th of November 1793, at Toulon. [They were accordingly read.]

He would take the liberty, in the course of what he had to offer to the house, to contend, that there was nothing at present in the situation of the country, or of Europe, which ought to induce the house to depart from the sentiments recorded in those declarations; from the sentiments expressed from the throne, and from those sentiments which had received the approbation of parliament. He would contend that the motion that had been made was directly inconsistent with those principles, and he would farther contend, that, whatever there was in the present situation of the country, it called on the house, instead of acceding to the honourable gentleman's motion, to shew to our enemies and to the world, that we did not shrink from those sober and rational principles which we had uniformly maintained. With that view, he thought it right in the outset to mention the precise nature and terms of the amendment he meant to propose, which was as follows:

“ That under the present circumstances, this house feels itself called upon to declare its determination firmly and steadily to support his Majesty in the vigorous prosecution of the present just and necessary war, as affording, at this time, the only reasonable expectation of permanent security and peace to this country: And that, for the attainment of these objects, this house relies with equal confidence on his Majesty's intention to employ vigorously the force and resources of the country, in support of its essential interests; and on the desire uniformly manifested by his Majesty, to effect a pacification on just and honourable grounds with any government in France, under whatever form, which shall appear capable of maintaining the accustomed relations of peace and amity with other countries.”

He begged to refer the house to the authentic declarations of parliament and of the crown on this subject, from which it clearly



appeared, that his Majesty from the throne had avowed sentiments which they themselves had also stated in speeches in that house, and which he believed, to a greater or less extent, had been adopted by every man in that house and in the country, namely, that it would be a desirable issue of the present state of things, to see the re-establishment of some government in the form of a monarchy in France. His Majesty had declared his desire to co-operate with those who were willing to effect that re-establishment. That nothing was more justifiable, and, under the present circumstances, would be more political, than to direct the efforts of this country to avail itself of any opening in that country, if any there was, to facilitate the re-establishment of some monarchical government, was plain, obvious, and explicit: On the other hand, it was equally clear, that his Majesty's sentiments and the language of parliament were not to be tried by doubtful constructions or plausible misrepresentations, but by the most solemn written documents.

In fact, the restoration of monarchy, upon the old principles, had never been stated by his Majesty, by government, or by parliament, as a *sine quâ non*, as preparatory to peace. Not only so, but it had never been stated that any one specific and particular form of government was deemed on our part necessary, before we could negotiate for peace. It had been stated, that his Majesty had no desire to interfere in the internal affairs of France; and as long as that country had abstained from interfering with the government of other nations, till a direct and absolute aggression had been made on this country, and till hostilities had been actually commenced, his Majesty adhered strictly to that declaration, and abstained from any such interference: When that interference took place, which was agreeable to every experience and practice of the world, and justifiable on every plain principle of the law of nations, his Majesty still restrained himself to that degree of interference which was necessary for his own security and that of Europe. When his Majesty felt himself under the necessity of looking at the government of France, he looked at it certainly not without a wish which must

naturally arise in every generous heart, that it might be adapted for the prosperity and happiness of those who were to live under it. But with a view to negotiation and to peace, his Majesty did not look at it with that view, or for that purpose. He could only look at it for English views and for English purposes, to see whether it held out the solid grounds of treating, with any degree of reasonable security, for the performance of engagements that usually subsisted, and was to be found in the existing system of the different powers of Europe, without being liable to that new and unexampled order of things, that state of anarchy and confusion, which had for years existed in France. That having been the true measure and extent of the declarations made by his Majesty and by parliament, he conceived that no man in that house, on looking back to them, would wish he had not made those declarations; that no man would feel they were not made on just principles, or that they did not arise from a fair view of the circumstances and necessity of the case. He had endeavoured to state his amendment almost in the very form of his Majesty's declarations. The honourable gentlemen on the other side of the house were of opinion, that in no case the form of government in another country ought to be considered as having any influence on the security of a treaty, but that we ought only to look to the terms and conditions of the treaty, without regarding the power, the authority, the character, the nature and circumstances of the government that made it, or the state of that government. To that doctrine, however, he could never assent. He must contend, that every nation at war with another, ought not to treat for peace with a government that could not give security. He was not ready, therefore, to treat with the present government of France; nor with any government, under any circumstances, or at any time, but such as should appear capable of maintaining the accustomed forms of peace and amity with other nations.

That the situation of France, since the commencement of the present war, had been such, that there did not exist in that country a government capable of maintaining with other nations the

accustomed relations he had stated ;—that it was in a situation in which no security that could be given to a peace, made it preferable to the continuing of a difficult and hazardous war, was a proposition which he was perfectly prepared to maintain. It was a proposition that had been maintained again and again in that house, and by some of the gentlemen who now seemed to think that treaty ought to be attempted. He conceived, as it appeared on the face of the argument of that day, that the honourable mover and others could not expect any considerable part of the house to agree with them, either in their principles or their conclusions. They set out with observing, that the war was not a war originating in aggression on the part of France, and that we had not that proof of the hostile intentions of France towards this country, which would demonstrate that the war was just and necessary in its origin. It had, as he had just observed that day, been denied that the war commenced by aggression on the part of France ; but that in fact it had originated with this country. To such an assertion neither he, nor those who had acted with him, could accede, without sacrificing every principle upon which they had hitherto called for and received the zealous and uniform support of the country. But that was not all, The honourable mover, and those who supported him, must contend, that throughout the whole of the French revolution, from the very commencement of it, during the reign of the two tyrants Brissot and Robespierre, as well as under the present system of moderation, there was no one period in what was falsely termed the republican government, even in the most bloody part of the reign of Robespierre when there was no one pause of anarchy and confusion, even when that government was supported by terror, and declared to be supported by enthusiasm, at the moment when the system of terror was working its own destruction—there was no one period in which the government of France did not possess sufficient stability or authority founded on a permanent basis, in which it did not possess a sufficient community of interest with the people, a sufficient interest in the hearts of the people, a sufficient guard for its own engagements, sufficient



power, sufficient moderation of sentiment, to afford this country a rational prospect of security.

From the beginning of the war to that moment, supposing the terms of peace could be settled, we were not, according to the honourable mover, and those who agreed with him, to consider our security as affected by the internal situation of France. The house had not said so: The house had said directly the reverse; and he hoped the house would say the same thing again. Every man in the house and in the country must be satisfied that, in the termination of every war, there were two objects, reparation and security; but the great object was security. Reparation was only an auxiliary, only a subordinate object. Would any man tell him that a nation like France, put into a situation perfectly new, into a situation directly the reverse of all the existing governments on earth, destroying the foundations and the bonds of all political society, breaking down the distinction of all ranks, and subverting the security of property; a government pretending to put a whole nation into a situation of pretended equality, not the equality of laws, but an actual equality, an equality contrary to the physical inequality of men — would any man tell him, that we ought to make peace with a government constructed upon such principles, which had attempted, by every means in its power, to molest its neighbours, to impoverish and distress itself; to propagate its pernicious principles, to make converts, and to hold out the means of seducing other nations; and that had followed that up by open and direct acts of aggression, by a positive violation of treaties, and lastly, by an open declaration of war? This country scrupulously and religiously observed a neutrality, while it could hope or have a reasonable prospect, that the mischiefs of the French revolution would be confined within their own territories. We remained passive spectators of the conduct of France, until the very moment that we against our will were forced into the contest. And would any man say that it was rational, under any circumstances, to attempt to negotiate a peace without taking into considera-

tion the idea of security, the attainment of which, as already observed, was the great and primary object of every war? The whole question was narrowed to a single and a plain point; war being at all times one of the greatest of human evils, and never to be tolerated on any other grounds than that the evils of war were less painful upon the whole than the dangers attending an insecure and dishonourable peace. The whole question from time to time since the commencement of hostilities, resolved itself into a comparison of these two evils. They must not impiously imagine they could explore the secrets of Providence, and define the precise point to which the fortune of war might compel them; that would be to arrogate more than belongs to human wisdom, and, like other presumptions, must terminate in error and disappointment. They must proceed on general principles, which he could fairly describe. For the application arising from the circumstances, he must refer to the wisdom of parliament. The general principle he had stated was, that they ought not to regard the particular form of the government, but to look to the whole, to all the circumstances, whether it was or was not a government that could give them a reasonable degree of security.

The immediate question between the honourable mover and him was, whether the present circumstances of the internal state and government of France did or did not afford a prospect of sufficient security for a peace, so as to make it wise on the part of this country to negotiate it? That was a question of infinite importance. It was, whether the government of France was such, at that moment, as to hold out that degree of reasonable security from any treaty of peace which might be concluded, as to make it, under all the present circumstances, preferable to the vigorous prosecution of the war? What did they naturally look to in the state of any country, but to the manner in which they performed their engagements! They looked to their stability—to their apparent authority—and to the reliance they could place in their pacific dispositions. He would not dwell on these circumstances.

Let them recollect what had been generated under that system, and those principles that were now prevalent in France. They had seen them producing and exhibiting hitherto, not a government, but a succession and series of revolutions, for that was the proper situation in which France had stood since the commencement of the present war. The terror of this revolution had been suspended a little more than six months. They had seen the reign and fall of Brissot; they had seen the reign and fall of Robespierre; and they now saw the prevalence of a system that was called moderatism. They had to recollect that gentlemen on the other side of the house held out to them the same sort of arguments for entering into a treaty with France, almost on the extinction of these two tyrants. Arguments were then produced of the stability of the government; and they now saw what was the ground of security, and how much they ought to depend on such arguments. But he did not wish to rest the question solely on the ground of so many successive changes, but, whether the manner in which they had cried up the sovereignty of the people, whether the manner in which the pride and passions of the populace had been erected into the criterion and rule of government, afforded any rational ground of security to any peace that could possibly be made. If that was not so, what were the particular grounds of permanence now existing in France, that ought to give us dependance on its stability more than formerly, in the time of Brissot and Robespierre? The mere question of moderatism would not be sufficient for that purpose. Though there was some relaxation of the severity and terror of former times, that would not be sufficient. It was a moderation which arose only from comparison. The system of revolutionary tribunals was not varied. That great leading article on which the happiness of the people so materially depended was not essentially varied, whatever it might be in mode or degree. He said he would not tire the house on that subject, but examine what were the leading points to which they ought to turn their attention. Some of



them had been enumerated by a noble friend of his\*, at the beginning of last session, with a force of language and of argument, which had made too strong an impression upon the minds of those who heard him, to be readily forgotten. He had then most clearly shewed the influence of public opinion, as unfavourable to the permanence of the government, and paving the way for its destruction. He said, he mentioned this for the purpose of shewing, that when the power of Robespierre was at its height, it was understood by the other side of the house as a powerful argument of the great stability of the government. That tyrant possessed the greatest degree of power and terror that ever existed; whereas the present rulers of France being disarmed of that force, had only the chance of being supported by the opinion of the people. Look at the manner in which the revenue was at present collected in France. Did the present government recommend itself by the greater moderation of the means it used? Within a little more than a year and a half, the confiscations that took place in that devoted country, and which were the resources of the present government, exceeded THREE HUNDRED MILLIONS STERLING! That was the amount of the confiscations from May 1793, to the month of May last. And these confiscations were founded on what?—Upon that which would be looked upon by a British house of commons, and by this country in general, with horror. That immense sum did not arise from seizing the fortunes of exiled nobles and emigrants, but from confiscations made long after. They had seized as forfeitures the property of all persons who remained in the country, but who were possessed of landed estates, and had shewn the smallest dislike to the revolution. Having exiled the whole nobility and great landed proprietors in the course of a year and a half, they had, after that, collected that great sum. Whether the charge of guilt, upon which that confiscation had been grounded, had been falsely or truly applied, it

\* Lord Mornington.

equally made for his argument. In one view, it furnished the strongest proof of oppression in consequence of the system of terror; and if it was considered in another view, it was an incontestible proof of the division of the sentiments of the people of France, which contradicted the observations of the honourable mover, who talked in such strong terms of that united people, although three hundred millions sterling were wrested from those persons who did not admire the principles of the revolution. Taken in the other view, it might be considered as the fruits of the bloody massacres that took place under the dominion of Robespierre. It would appear then, what weight was due to the assertion, that all the French were united in one cause, when the great resources by which they had been able to carry on the war, had been derived almost entirely from the fund of confiscation and proscription, and had been the fruits and harvest of the bloody massacres which had marked the different periods of their revolution, and consisted of that system, on their professed detestation of which they built their power, and by the destruction of which alone, they attempted to support it, and acquire the confidence, affection, and good-will of the country. If these had hitherto formed its principal resources, in renouncing the system of Robespierre, the present government had crippled their power of action, and deprived themselves of the means of exertion.

Mr. Pitt next called the attention of the house to the state of the agriculture and commerce of France. He said he wished to describe the present state of the agriculture and commerce of that country, not from any reports which the honourable mover might suppose had come to his hands from those who were friendly to him: his reporters were certainly not persons immediately dependant on him, or those who had any good-will towards him. They were the members of the national convention of France, who made reports to that assembly from the several committees. According to those reports, their agriculture was *extinguished*; their commerce *annihilated*. That was the situation in which France stood. They

had declared they were willing to re-animate commerce : but the present actual situation of the country was such as he had described. See whether, in fact, they had afforded any relief to commerce, and to the agriculture of the country, and whether they had any just title to the love and affection of the bulk of the people.

He next adverted to the state of justice in the country. All sanguinary cruelties had been committed through the medium of revolutionary tribunals : and though they were less cruel under the present government, they were only so by comparison with the former system, properly denominated the system of terror.

He desired the house to look at the state of religion in France, and asked them if they would willingly treat with a nation of atheists. He did not wish to consider them in that point of view. God forbid, that we should look on the body of the people of France as atheists, whatever might be the case with some individuals ! It was not possible that a whole nation, in so short a time, should have renounced the religion of their fathers, forgotten all the principles in which they had been educated, extinguished the feelings of nature, and subdued the workings of conscience. To the larger proportion of the mass, there could not be a heavier burden than to be deprived of the exercise of that religion, and to be deprived of it in a country that called itself a land of liberty, and which set out on the principles of toleration, in a country which supposed itself to enjoy more than human liberty ; and yet, under the present *moderate* government, he believed a proposition had been made, to solemnize the Christian religion ; when the convention passed to the order of the day, proposing forthwith to establish a plan of decadal pagan festivals, and accompanied by a declaration, that all the priests should be detained in prison till that new religion was established. Although the present convention of France profess to have renounced the crimes and cruelties of their predecessors, yet, since they had been in a state of pure innocence,



had there been more apparent unanimity among those in whom the present government subsisted? On the contrary, there never had been stronger instances of opposition, distraction, and confusion. They were continually recriminating on each other the guilt of those very cruelties he had been stating. Did he say then that the present system of government in France must necessarily fall? He said no such thing. Did he then say that the present rulers of France might not extricate themselves in some degree from that abuse, and follow a more just and prudent line; and that they might not gradually draw a veil over former severities, by which, if they could not gain the good opinion and confidence of others, they might at least obtain their acquiescence? They certainly might. Had that time arrived? Undoubtedly it had not. But if such a change should take place, and such an order of things should arrive, through whatever road, and by whatever means, if they gave to their government that stability and that authority which might afford grounds, not of certainty, but of moral probability (by which human affairs must be conducted) that we might treat for peace with security, then would be the proper time to negotiate; but we ought in prudence to wait the return of such circumstances as would afford us a probability of treating with success. So much on that part of the subject.

Supposing, however, that he did not look to the chance of a change, the next thing was, what assurance had we of the pacific disposition of the present national convention of France toward this country? We had reasons founded on probability, to infer that they entertained a spirit of hostility to all regular governments, and most of all to the government of Great Britain. If they had any reason to believe that the convention of France were disposed to peace, must he not infer that they were disposed to it, because they thought it would most probably tend to their advantage, and to our ruin? Till there was satisfactory evidence that their spirit of hostility to other nations was destroyed, he saw probable

ground, in the very nature of their system, that they must persevere in that hostility, till they ceased to act upon it. They looked upon their own government as the only lawful government in the world, and regarded the governments of all other nations as usurpation. Such was the ground on which they had undertaken the war. Did France make any professions of peace, or did she shew any dispositions for peace, but as she felt herself wearied of the war, and as she found herself involved in difficulties? The national convention had said plainly they desired a partial peace, because so extensive a war they found themselves unequal to prosecute. They had professed they desired peace with some of the powers, in order to ruin more securely those against whom they wished still to carry on the war; and he might add, afterwards to ruin those with whom now they professed to be willing to treat for peace. They would make a distinction in making peace. Their moderation was reserved for Holland, their vindictive principles for Great Britain. Could such dispositions either give security to peace, or render it of long continuance?

It had been stated, that the decree of the 19th of November had been repealed, and that therefore the French no longer aspired at interfering with the internal government of other countries. In April 1793, they had enacted something on the subject of peace. They enacted that the penalty of death should be inflicted on any person who should propose peace with any country, unless that country acknowledged the French republic, one and indivisible, founded on the principles of liberty and equality. They were not merely satisfied with a partial acknowledgment *de facto*; they required an acknowledgment *de jure*. He wished to know, if these principles were once recognised as the legitimate foundation of government, whether they would not be universal in their application? Could these principles be excluded from other nations? And if they could not, would they not amount to a confession of the usurpation and injustice of every other government? If they were to treat for peace with France, they

knew one of the things that must be preparatory to it, and that was, that they would acknowledge what they had hitherto denied. They must acknowledge those principles which condemned the usurpation of all the other governments, and denied the very power they were exercising. Such was the preliminary that must precede a proposal to treat; and what next would happen if peace was obtained?—leaving out all consideration of the terms of it, which might be expected to be high in proportion to their acquisition of territory. Did they look at the situation in which they would lay open this country to all the emissaries of France? In proportion to the success of France, those principles had grown more bold in this, and in every other country. They had increased in activity and means of resistance. Were they to give up those safeguards which had been lately thrown round the constitution; and were they to follow the advice of the other side of the house by having recourse to the universal loyalty of the people of England? Did gentlemen think that we ran no risk of serious internal dangers by reviving and rekindling the embers of that faction in this country, which the other side of the house had supposed were now totally extinguished? Peace obtained under such circumstances, could not be stated with confidence as to its permanence, and therefore, if it were to be obtained, we must remain in a state of vigilant jealousy and never-ceasing suspicion. In that state, what sort of peace could we enjoy?—Could such a state possibly be preferable to war?—Would they not then give up those advantages they enjoyed? Were the country to disarm, few, he supposed, would be inclined to approve of that alternative; on the other hand, they could not remain armed without giving up, in a certain degree, that pitch of force, to which they had brought the exertions of the country, and retaining an establishment burthensome to peace, and ineffectual to war. It was impossible for any human being, in the present circumstances, to suppose a state of settled peace; it must be a state of watching each other, of inquietude, of distrust, merely



a short truce, a state of partial inactivity and interrupted repose. In such a peace there could be no security ; it was exposed to so much hazard, doubt, and danger, that no man could possibly look to it, except the exhausted state of our resources was such as to exclude the possibility of further exertion. The question was not the option between peace and war, but the option of war under considerable difficulties, with great means and resources, or peace without security.

He said he should be ashamed to go over the means of our resources ; but as that object had been touched on by the honourable gentleman who had introduced the question, he must say a few words on the relative situation of the two countries. The foundation of the argument of the honourable mover was, that the resources of France were of so extraordinary a nature, that they were such as the other nations of Europe could not bear, but France, having borne them for so many years, could do that which other nations could not do — and that they were therefore bound to suppose that the resources of France were superior to those of this country, which had expended so many millions without having had any effect on the revenue, commerce, and manufactures of the country, without means that were equal to the pressure sustained in other wars where this country had carried them on successfully. The honourable gentleman, who swept off millions from the expenditure of France, had added them with as rude a hand to the account of this country ; he had said, if we were to make peace at that moment, the expense would be seventy millions sterling, and the extra expenses would be calculated moderately at fifty millions sterling. How much the honourable gentleman allowed for winding up expenses he knew not, but they were certainly large. Without taking in the expenses of the present year of 220,000 men, including the regular army and militia, and the vote of 100,000 seamen, to the best of his recollection,—taking the expenses of the year 1793 and of 1794 up to the end of last December, the sum was about twenty-five millions sterling, and there was a

capital to be created, of somewhat more than thirty millions. This point was not very closely connected with the question, but he had corrected the statement of the honourable gentleman, who wished to shew we were no longer able to carry on the war, though he could not prove the least defalcation in the revenue of the country, or a diminution of the public credit. To what was that sum to be opposed on the part of France? To 260 millions sterling, which that country had expended during the last two years. Would any man say that France could afford to spend 260 millions sterling, of which the inhabitants had been plundered, better than Great Britain? That immense sum had been collected in France by force and terror, and had been attended by effects admitted by themselves to produce the desolation of the interior of the country, the extinction of agriculture, the ruin of their resources, the subversion of all the means of profitable industry, and the annihilation of every branch of commerce, besides the collateral circumstance of the system of assignats which he had mentioned on a former day. He said, on a former day he had made the expenses of the French republic amount to 480 millions sterling, which the honourable gentleman who had made the motion said was exaggerated by 120 millions. But the honourable gentleman had begun his calculations two years later than he, which was the reason of that difference. The assignats, which were formerly near par, were now about 85 per cent. below it. That the house might not mistake him, they were not worth 85*l.* per cent. but only 15*l.* per cent. And therefore he repeated his former assertion, that there was a rapid and a progressive decay in the internal resources of France. It had been stated, that he had year after year represented the resources of France to be in a rapid state of decline. The first year of the war cost France 160 millions, which produced a rapid and progressive decay in the state of their finances; and was there any thing ridiculous in supposing those resources to be still in a progressive state of decay, after they had expended, during the last campaign, another 160 millions sterling?

The honourable gentleman \* who seconded the motion, in the longest simile he had ever heard, observed, that the resources of America were declining for three years together. But would any man say that the features of that war bore any resemblance to those of the present, which marked the calamities of France? It had been observed, that the French were making great exertions, and that therefore it was unjust to say their resources were at all decayed. But the question was, whether those great exertions ought not to be considered as a proof of the decay of the resources of the country? Would any man tell him that the internal state of the country would not be affected by a continued and extraordinary supply of the nerves and sinews of war? The honourable gentleman who made the motion, had stated that the French had extended their conquests from Gibraltar to the Baltic. But no brilliant success, no acquisition of territory, was sufficient to compensate this internal decay of resources. The wide difference, in point of resources, was as important to the fate of empires and the lot of kingdoms, as new conquest; and the balance there was as much in our favour, as the acquisition of territory was against other countries and in favour of France.

There were many other points on which he wished to touch, but would not discuss them at length. One or two observations he could not help stating. It had been asked, what force had we to oppose to that of France? He answered, an increased force on the part of this country. The convention had said that their forces must be contracted: their efforts must therefore be exhausted. Besides the exertions by sea and land which had been made by this country, it would probably depend on the resolution and firmness of that house, whether the emperor might not be enabled to bring such a military force into the field, as would render an extent of exertion necessary on the part of France, of which they had declared themselves incapable. It was said, do you expect to conquer France? do you expect a

\* Mr. W. Smith.



counter-revolution? When do you intend to march to Paris? If such was at one time our success in France, that the convention were put in imminent fear of the combined armies penetrating to Paris, it was not very extraordinary that his honourable friend \* at London should allow himself to entertain a degree of hope of the possibility of that event. By a mode of arguing, not unusual with gentlemen on the other side, whose practice it frequently was, first to state positions in order that they afterwards might combat them, ministers had been charged with looking to the conquest of France. They had never held out any such object; they had only professed their hope of making such an impression upon the interior of that country as might lead to a secure and stable peace; and of being able, by the assistance of those well-disposed persons who were enemies to the present system, to establish a government honourable to them and safe to ourselves. If a change had taken place in the government of France, which rendered it more expedient for us to treat in the present than at a former period, he would ask, if nothing had been gained? We were now in a situation less remote from that in which we might be able to treat with security. It had been urged, that we ought to have let France alone. What was the consequence of neutrality but to produce aggression? But now that war had been two years carried on, the detestable system of their government had subsided into a state of less flagrant atrocity. It had been said that all France, to a man, was united for a republic. What was meant by the phrase of a republic? Was it merely a name at the top of a sheet of paper? Was their desire of a republic to be gathered from their submission to the tyranny of Robespierre? Was their unanimity to be inferred from the numerous proscriptions and massacres of federalists and royalists?

Mr. Pitt proceeded to recapitulate the general grounds on which he had opposed the original resolution, and the motives from which he had been induced to bring forward the amend-

\* Mr. Jenkinson.

ment, which he had read, and should conclude with moving. Peace! Peace was not obstructed by any form of government; but by a consideration of the internal circumstances of France. He remarked that there had been great misconstructions and misconceptions with respect to what he had stated on former occasions to be his sentiments, as to the re-establishment of monarchy, which he by no means wished to be considered as a *sine quâ non* to the attainment of peace, and therefore he had not contented himself with barely negating the resolution, but had been induced in the amendment to substitute that language which, in his mind, it became parliament to hold, as best adapted to the subject.

There was one other consideration to which he should advert, namely, the remark that the attempt to treat, though not likely to be successful, would yet be attended with advantage, both in France and this country. In France it would shew that we were disposed to treat. If it were wise to treat, this certainly would be an advantage; but such a conduct, instead of forwarding peace, would only be productive of danger, it would lead to a proposition of terms from France, elated by its recent acquisitions, which it would be impossible for this country to accept. And he trusted that his honourable friend \*, who had, he conceived, gone too far in his propositions with respect to peace on a former occasion, would be convinced, upon his own principles, that as the difficulty increased, any proposition to treat in the present moment would have the effect to encourage the enemy, and to bury the remains of opposition in France. In this country it would have the effect to sink the spirit of the people, and to tell them that it was right to look for peace, though it was impossible to look for security; it would be to insinuate a doubt of their zeal, energy, and courage, and to add to the depression already produced by a succession of misfortunes and a series of misrepresentations. The honourable gentleman had said, that if his proposition to treat should not in the event be successful, he would then support the war. Upon

\* Mr. Wilberforce.

what ground could he support a war, which he had in the first instance conceived and declared to be neither necessary nor just? But till the period should arrive at which it would be possible to treat, with a rational prospect of security, and a degree of, at least, probable advantage, he, and those who thought with him, must continue to support a war, of the justice and necessity of which they were firmly persuaded, and which they could not, in the present moment, abandon without a sacrifice of their opinion, their consistency, and their honour.

The original motion was negatived ;

Ayes ..... 86

Noes ..... 269

and Mr. Pitt's amendment was afterwards adopted.

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### *March 24, 1795.*

DEBATE ON Mr. Fox's motion, "for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House to inquire into the State of the Nation."

MR. PITT rose the instant Mr. Fox sat down.

He said he would not follow the right honourable gentleman at length, through all the various points which he had selected for discussion, in a very long and certainly one of the most eloquent speeches ever delivered in that house. He would not argue them then, because, with one single exception, they had been repeatedly investigated and decided upon in that house in the course of the present and of the last session: He would not argue them then, because he was convinced that all the topics had been brought forward upon this occasion for the sole purpose of introducing the great and real object which the right honourable gentleman had in view, viz. the present situation of the kingdom of Ireland, which he had rested on as a separate and substantive ground of inquiry.



Leaving, therefore, for the present, all the various other points of the right honourable gentleman's speech, which had certainly been discussed with great ability, and which he should allude to cursorily by-and-by, he would confine himself to that part of it which related to Ireland; and he hoped to convince the house, and he would begin with stating, that in his judgment, that very statement which was urged as a ground for going into a committee, was, upon every principle of policy, the strongest reason to induce the house to negative the motion. It was with much reluctance that he felt himself bound to say any thing upon the subject. Independent of the delicacy which he must feel in discussing in the English house of commons points so intimately connected with the internal state of Ireland, and consequently more properly cognizable in the parliament of that kingdom, which had an independent legislature of its own, it could not but be obvious to every gentleman, that he must feel extremely cautious in making declarations upon this subject. He did not mean to deny that there was much reason to regret some occurrences which had happened in Ireland; but he would boldly, positively, and unequivocally assert, that if this affair should be fully investigated, it would appear to the house and to the kingdom that none of the embarrassments which might happen in that country, could in any degree be attributed to his Majesty's servants here. He would not then enter into the question, Whether any blame attached to the respectable person at the head of the government. He had only thought it necessary to make an assertion in justice to himself and his colleagues, which he would defy at any future period to be disapproved. More than this he would not say at present, except to observe, that if it was true that the sister kingdom was in a situation of irritation, ferment, and uneasiness, it certainly was the strongest reason possible why that moment should not be chosen for the proposed inquiry. The great question was, what advantage would arise from the investigation proposed by the right honourable gentleman? He begged leave to ask the right honourable gentleman, what good to either kingdom could possibly arise from a dis-

cussion of the subject at the present moment?—In what manner did he propose to conduct the inquiry, if the house should agree to its expediency?

The right honourable gentleman had told the house that he had a motion to submit to a committee of inquiry, if it should be granted, which would not require the production of any paper to support it: but he wished to consider, nay he would put it to the candour of the right honourable gentleman himself, whether such an inquiry as this could be made to any effect whatever, without the production of a variety of papers, letters, dispatches, &c. which it would be impossible at this period to make public. If the right honourable gentleman felt, as every friend to this country must feel, a degree of uneasiness at even a momentary interruption of the harmony and good understanding, which ought, and he hoped always would, subsist between the two countries, surely he could not think his present motion a likely way to remove the embarrassments which were supposed to exist, and to restore the harmony which was stated to have been interrupted.

The right honourable gentleman had used the state of Ireland as he did almost every other occurrence—he had converted it into an argument to induce the house to change the opinions they had repeatedly and solemnly given upon the subject of the war, and to prove the necessity of an immediate peace. Here again his own statement made against the object he had in view. For if it was true that those embarrassments and that irritation existed in Ireland; if the probable consequence of that state of affairs was, as had been stated, that we should not receive that cordial co-operation from Ireland, was it likely that these circumstances would have the effect of procuring us a better peace; or would an advantageous peace be more likely to be obtained, from having their temporary differences rendered so public as they necessarily must be, if this inquiry was gone into? Thus the arguments of the right honourable gentleman answered themselves; but at the same time he by no means meant to

admit that the danger in the sister kingdom was, in any degree, so great as had been represented.

With respect to the observations which had been made relative to the body of Roman catholics in Ireland, he was sure that the house must feel that so great a legislative act, one so intimately connected with the interests of Ireland, and which formed so peculiarly a subject of the consideration of the Irish parliament, could not then with propriety be discussed in the English house of commons. What was it but saying to them, that the bare circumstance of calling those claims in question, that the delay interposed in granting them to their utmost extent, that the hesitating to level all those distinctions which had so long been established, and the policy of not being in too great haste to heap upon them new privileges in addition to those which they had so lately acquired, were to them matters of serious and intolerable grievance? What was it but to countenance discontent under pretext of lamenting it, and to produce danger by the very means which were recommended as useful for precaution? What was it but proclaiming to the enemies the embarrassment and difficulties under which we laboured at home?—a sort of conduct by no means calculated to diminish their hopes of success, or infuse into them new dispositions to peace. If the house, from the progress of the French arms in Brabant and Holland, and from the views which they discovered of enlarging their territories, in proportion to the extent of their conquests, had been only more deeply impressed with the necessity of vigorous exertion and manly perseverance in the contest, would they be likely to adopt a motion, which in the result could only be productive of humiliation and disappointment? Would they proclaim to the enemy a danger with respect to themselves, which, if not proclaimed, might in fact have no existence? Considered in this point of view, he could not well imagine a conduct less consistent with sound policy, with the true interests of the empire, or the termination of that great struggle in which the country was engaged, than that which was proposed by the present motion.



With respect to the principles, so far as they affected Ireland, the comforts of individuals, the peace of the community, and the question in favour of policy, how far an equal participation of rights ought at once to take place between those who had long been established, and those who had formerly been merely tolerated ; all these were topics, into which he should not enter at present, as in all probability a future opportunity would present itself for their discussion. Having dismissed that part of the right honourable gentleman's argument which appeared to him the most important, he should follow him very cursorily through the other general divisions of it.

Without meaning to say any thing personally uncivil to the right honourable gentleman, he could not for a moment suppose him serious in any of the arguments which composed the former part of his speech. He hardly knew how to suppose the right honourable gentleman could be in earnest, when he occupied upwards of three hours in delivering a speech masterly and eloquent beyond parallel, for the purpose of introducing a peroration which lasted not more than a quarter of an hour, applied to the particular circumstances of the time. His speech consisted of topics which had been urged over and over again by gentlemen on the opposite side of the house, and as frequently answered, and which, as he had observed before, would not then have been again brought forward, except for the purpose of ushering in the main object of his speech, viz. the affairs of Ireland.

Mr. Pitt said, he had no complaint to make of the general nature of the subjects selected by the right honourable gentleman as fit subjects for inquiry ; they were such certainly as must always claim the attention of the house of commons. They consisted first of the general resources of this country in point of men and money, as the only effectual means of war ; a detailed examination into the state of the population of this country ; a view of the situation of our manufactures and commerce ; a consideration of our foreign connections, both as relating to our allies and to neutral nations, and an investigation

into the object of the war, and the means adopted by the executive government for carrying it on. If the house was at this moment convinced of the necessity of going into an inquiry upon the state of the nation, most undoubtedly these would all form important points of consideration.

He begged to ask the house, however, if there was any one subject, of whatever nature, that had any the most distant relation either to the external policy or the internal regulations of this country, which might not become matter of discussion in the committee proposed by the right honourable gentleman? and if so, could it be contended that this was the time for such an inquiry? At a period so arduous and important as the present, when the country was stated to be, in every point of view, in such imminent danger, could gentlemen think it expedient or wise to commence an investigation of so extensive, and almost endless a nature, and more especially at so advanced a period of the session, when there was no probability of making any considerable progress in it? Although not only every topic of the right honourable gentleman's speech had been before debated, but almost every one of his arguments had been before advanced and refuted, yet there was one unfortunate singularity in his mode of arguing upon this occasion, which was, that he contended that it was necessary to refer all these points to the consideration of a committee, for the purpose of forming a correct judgment upon them; yet that gentleman, and the small minority who acted with him, had long ago taken upon themselves to decide positively upon every one of them. The great majority of that house had decided upon different principles;—principles which they had deliberately adopted, upon which they were now acting, and into the grounds of which it could not therefore be supposed necessary that they should now inquire.

The discussions which had taken place upon these various subjects had, in his opinion, rendered the appointment of a committee as unnecessary, as, in another point of view, he had contended it to be improper. They were called upon to exa-

mine into the pecuniary resources of this country. The house had already this session much more satisfactory proof upon this head than any committee could give them. They had seen a supply voted for the service of the year, unexampled in point of amount. They had seen a loan of eighteen millions negotiated upon terms extremely advantageous to the public—a sum great and unprecedented, but necessary from the magnitude of the contest in which we were engaged, and the novelty of the efforts with which we had to contend. The bill granting that loan, and stating the terms upon which it was supplied, was a more satisfactory proof of the flourishing state of the credit of the country, and of the confidence of monied men, than could be derived from the result of any inquiry that could take place. It proved, in spite of all the exaggeration which had been employed to depreciate the resources of the country, that, so far from having suffered any diminution, they had increased in a degree equal to the extraordinary scale of expenditure which had lately been incurred. They had seen taxes to an immense amount, 1,600,000*l.*, (much increased in consequence of the provision made by the vigilant attention against unforeseen exigencies, and from the circumstances of a provision being also made for the reduction of the debt at the very moment that it was contracted,) laid on the public—taxes which there was every reason to suppose would be productive, and yet such as were on all sides allowed to press as little as possible upon the poor. Could the house, after this solid unanswerable proof of the resources of the country, be led by the speculative arguments of the right honourable gentleman to have recourse to a committee for the purpose of ascertaining the fact?

The next point which had been discussed, was the state of the population of this kingdom. It had been contended, that it was in such a decreasing state as to render it impossible to recruit our armies. This was a point upon which he had never before heard a doubt entertained. He was sure that no information which could be given by government upon this subject had ever been refused. That in the course of a war, so novel



in its nature, and so unexampled in its probable consequences as the present, we must lose a considerable number of men, was a melancholy truth which could not be denied. The loss even of one man from our troops, who had upon every occasion during this war maintained the honour of the country, and acquired immortal glory to themselves, was an event which must be deeply deplored; yet when the importance of the object was considered, and the immense stake we had upon the issue of this contest, it was necessary to look with a firm determination to the discharge of that imperious duty, which required such sacrifices, great as they were, for the good of the community. Any consideration therefore drawn from this topic, though it might have the effect to agitate the feelings, could not be expected to decide the result of the opinions of the members of that house. It was always to be remembered, that defensive efforts in the prosecution of a just war, were better than tame acquiescence in the usurpations of a cruel and oppressive enemy. The question whether we had lost in the course of the war a few hundreds more, however it might affect their feelings, yet by no means decided the general question. Every object in life was great or small by comparison; the loss of any of our gallant countrymen, considered abstractedly, must be felt as a calamity; but when considered with a relation to the nature of the present contest, that loss, great as it was, ceased to be felt in the immense magnitude of the object for which we were engaged.

It was to be observed, however, that the right honourable gentleman had taken this subject only in one point of view, and that most unfavourable for this country. The losses sustained by England were enumerated with the most scrupulous exactness, and an argument had been drawn from thence to shew that we were unable, from want of men, to carry on the war. Did the honourable gentleman consider the other side of this picture? Had he stated the numbers lost by the enemy, which upon a moderate computation must be in the proportion of ten to one compared with ours; or had he from their losses inferred their inability to continue the contest? No—the argument had been

pressed with vehemence, as proving the distress of this country, but would probably be said to be totally inapplicable to the enemy.

With respect to the population of this country, it had once before formed a subject of debate, and the right honourable gentleman upon that occasion, as well as upon the present, had argued upon false premises—he had formed his calculations upon decrease of the population, from an examination of the returns of houses paying taxes: that was a fallacious mode of judging, as the accounts were in general inaccurately taken, and of course could not be relied on for an exact conclusion. He would suggest to the house, and to the honourable gentleman, a criterion which was by no means so liable to inaccuracy. When gentlemen saw the immense increase of manufactures, and of course the great increase of hands employed in them, and did not find that these hands were drawn from any other branch, the natural and rational conclusion was, that the population must be on the increase. The honourable gentleman said, that in some part of Lancashire the decrease of marriages and births was very great—in some places they had decreased one half, in others a third and a fourth, when by his own calculation he had estimated the decrease at only 12,000 persons: but it should be recollected that the quarter in which the calculation had been made, was in the neighbourhood of a manufacturing town, where the recruiting had been carried on with the greatest effect.

The army of this country was greater now than ever it was at any former period: the navy had also been augmented to an amazing extent. This must necessarily tend in some places to lessen the population, but did not by any means prove that the decrease was general. And notwithstanding this great augmentation of the army and navy, so far from manufactures having decreased, the export had been greater last year than in any former year of war, and greater, with the exception only of two years, than any former year of peace. The right honourable gentleman had alluded to the declension of our trade in

the year 1793. It was certainly true that our trade had been considerably less that year, but it was owing to the great speculations of persons engaged in commerce, which in the year before had given a temporary stagnation to trade: and yet so far from the country sinking under that check, or giving way to the pressure of a war represented to be so fatal to our trade, in the very next year, viz. 1794, the commerce had arisen to a height never before known, except only in the years 1791, and 1792. Formerly it was customary to look to the years immediately preceding the American war as the most flourishing period of our commerce, and after the commencement of that war, it was supposed that many, many years of peace would be necessary to raise it again to the same pitch; and yet now in a time of war, and one stated to be so much more injurious to our trade than the American war, our commerce far exceeded that of the boasted years of 1770, 1771, &c. Were not all these facts which the house were in possession of, more satisfactory than the report of any committee? If any inquiry upon this subject had been necessary, it would have been before the ways and means of the year were stated, before the resources of the country were detailed and proved to the house; but now it was wholly unnecessary.

The next proposition of the right honourable gentleman was one of a most singular nature. It was calling upon the house to go into a committee of inquiry, to take into consideration all transactions whatever between Great Britain and her allies, and also between her and neutral nations. Without any regard to what might be the situation of this country with respect to those powers, whatever negotiations or treaties might be pending, the whole was to undergo the scrutiny of a committee of inquiry, and to be published to the world. The arguments used by the right honourable gentleman were upon this subject so strange and so unfounded, that it was unnecessary to reply minutely to them.

With respect to the king of Prussia, Mr. Pitt said, he had already stated his sentiments upon the conduct of that monarch.



He had never contended that all the objects we had in view in that treaty were obtained, or that the king of Prussia had fully performed his engagements. He had admitted this when the subject was before brought under discussion, but he must repeat now what he had asserted then, that the failure on the part of the king of Prussia was no reason why this country was to depart from its general system, and was never, upon any occasion, again to enter into a treaty with other powers of a similar nature. But then the right honourable gentleman had urged the necessity of some declaration being made on the part of this country, expressive of our resentment at the non-performance of the treaty. It did not appear to him that such conduct on our part was called for by honour, or would be justified by reason. Angry declarations would only have the effect of creating animosities which might interrupt or prevent any future arrangements. The right honourable gentleman then alluded to the emperor, and spoke in very strong terms of his inability, from the want of pecuniary resources, to carry on the war. Admitting the truth of that argument in its fullest extent, it did not go far enough to serve the right honourable gentleman's purpose. If that house still retained the opinions they had so often and so distinctly expressed upon the subject of the present war, the natural conclusion to be drawn from the argument of the emperor's pecuniary inability was, that Great Britain, possessed of resources of money, should by means of those resources enable the emperor to bring his troops into the field.

In speaking of our allies, the right honourable gentleman had pressed much upon the repeated defeats and losses which they had sustained. It was unfortunately but too true, that the success had not corresponded with the expectations we had formed; but it was a very unfair mode of reasoning to suppose that because the allies had not been positively successful, they were totally useless: for though the effect of their assistance was not displayed in victories and conquests, yet, by engaging the attention of the enemy to various quarters, they had tended

to divide a force which, if concentrated in a point, might have been infinitely more destructive. The next power to which the right honourable gentleman had turned his attention was the king of Sardinia; and he had contended that that monarch ought to have been left in a state of neutrality. In the first place, he begged to remind the house and the right honourable gentleman, that the king of Sardinia was left without an option, whether he would remain neuter or not, as the French declared war against him. In regard to his being put into a state of neutrality at present, the only means of doing it was to carry on the war with vigour, or his neutrality would neither be safe to himself nor to the allies.

The next point of the right honourable gentleman's speech, was his observations upon the declarations made by our ministers at foreign courts. Was it fair to quote particular expressions from their state papers, in order to charge them upon ministers? These papers were framed according to the exigency of circumstances, and at the discretion of the envoy; ministers at home had no share either in composing or in reviewing their contents; and, if they should afterwards discover in them a careless or hasty expression, it was not to be supposed that they would very severely criticize, or very rigourously expose a fault which they might be apt to impute to excess of zeal for his Majesty's service. He begged, therefore, once for all, to put in a protest against that mode which gentlemen on the other side of the house had so frequently used, namely, that of selecting a particular passage from some of these state papers, and then charging it upon the ministers at home, who would not of course anticipate every identical expression which a foreign minister might make use of. Upon examining these declarations fairly and altogether, they would be found to agree in sentiment with each other, and with the language of ministers at home.

As to the proposal for an inquiry into the conduct of the executive government of this country to neutral nations, he was not aware of any good that could possibly arise from it at the

present moment. Whatever might be the strong language in which gentlemen might have thought proper to indulge themselves with respect to the conduct of the British government towards foreign nations, it would be found, when the proper period should arrive for investigation, to have been strictly conformable to the best principles of the laws of nations, and to have been conspicuously marked by moderation and forbearance.

The right honourable gentleman had charged ministers with having in the first instance treated America with insult, and afterwards soothed her by submission. In answer to this, he could only say, that the principle which had governed his Majesty's ministers in their intercourse with other neutral powers, was the principle upon which they acted towards America. And when the treaty signed between that country and Great Britain was laid before the house (which should be done as soon as possible), gentlemen would then have an opportunity of judging whether there had been any dishonourable submissions on the part of the latter, and whether it had not been rather dictated on both sides by a spirit of fairness and mutual accommodation.

The right honourable gentleman had next come to the consideration of that often disputed point, namely, the object of the war. Upon this subject he would not have intruded one single word upon the house, had it not been that the right honourable gentleman had in some degree shifted his ground. He had stated, that there were two lines of conduct which ministers might have adopted in the commencement of the war; each of these modes of conduct was in his (the right honourable gentleman's) opinion attended with its respective advantages and disadvantages; but both of them were preferable to the line of conduct adopted by his Majesty's ministers. The first of these modes was, by carrying on what he called a war *against* France, by confining the exertions of this country simply to protect our allies, and to revenge the insults offered to us, without in any manner whatever interfering in the internal commotions which might prevail in France. The other mode suggested was that of



carrying on a war *for* France; thus openly to avow that our efforts were directed to the formation of a regular government in France, and that our conquests were only made in trust for Louis XVII. — Either of these two systems might have been adopted, said the right honourable gentleman, with propriety, but our present system, differing from both, was radically wrong.

The right honourable gentleman had that night abandoned all his old arguments; he formerly used to contend that we could not interfere in the internal affairs of France, without violating every principle of justice and of the law of nations. But the right honourable gentleman admits, that it would have been proper to have carried on the war expressly for the restoration of monarchy in France. He did not recollect that both the grounds which he had submitted to ministers as an alternative, were extreme cases, and that they, from the nature of the situation in which they stood, might think proper to adopt a middle policy, to which the whole of their conduct might be found perfectly reconcileable. With all possible respect for the right honourable gentleman's judgment, he thought that his Majesty's ministers had conducted the war in a manner, and upon principles more consonant to good sense and policy, than either of the systems stated by that gentleman. They had entered into a war for the defence of this country and for the protection of our allies, in the prosecution of which they did not by any specific declarations as to the internal situation of France, prevent themselves from taking every possible advantage of any favourable occurrences which might happen in France. Nor did they state that the restoration of monarchy, or any particular form of government in France, was a *sine quâ non*, without which they would not make peace. The madness of fighting to establish in France any particular form of government, had been uniformly disclaimed by ministers. At the same time this was no reason why they should relinquish assistance, of which they had a right to avail themselves in every former war. The first great object was to obtain for ourselves security, and it would have been so much the better if

that object could have been more effectually accomplished by the establishment of a government in France, which seemed most likely to restore the country to tranquillity and happiness. It was necessary for the defence of our own possessions, that we should carry on an offensive war against the French in the West Indies.

This was the conduct of his Majesty's ministers — this was the conduct which had frequently been explained to, and had as often received the approbation of the house of commons; and he begged here, in the most distinct manner, to disavow that proposition laid down by the right honourable gentleman, that a nation, on entering into a war, was bound to state in clear and positive terms all its objects in the war, and by that means preclude itself from taking advantage of any fortuitous circumstances which might happen during its continuance.

With respect to what had fallen from the right honourable gentleman as to the want of vigilance and activity shewn by ministers in the conducting of the war, this point had been so often argued before, that he could say nothing new upon it. Upon one point only he would detain the house for a few moments, and that was in reply to the charge made by the right honourable gentleman, of the want of attention in the admiralty to protect the trade of Great Britain. The charge was partly founded upon the increase in the price of insurance. It was true, that from some causes the price of insurance had increased; but there were many circumstances to be taken into consideration upon this subject; — the great and unexampled extent of our commerce, which he had shewn in the former part of his speech; the almost total annihilation of the commerce of France, which led her to turn her attention to the equipment of privateers to plunder our trade, which swarmed in every sea. Another very important circumstance was, that the enemy had hardly in any one instance contended for the empire of the sea; a consequence of which was, that as their fleet was seldom united in a body, it was the better enabled in small divisions to harass our commerce. Added to all this, the enemy

did not send any considerable naval force to the colonies, while we were obliged to send large squadrons : but notwithstanding all these concurrent circumstances, our trade was not in any instance neglected. It was true, that for a short period the French were masters of the Channel, owing to the circumstance of Lord Howe's being obliged to put into port for the purpose of refitting ; but even during that short period, every possible precaution had been taken for the protection of our trade.

The right honourable gentleman had entered into a comparison between the quantity of our tonnage in 1778, and the present period, and had stated the quantity of tonnage in 1778, much greater than he (Mr. Pitt) had ever stated it at before ; but he must observe, that the register in 1778, contained the shipping belonging to the United States of America.

Upon the whole, the question for the consideration of the house was, whether or not they were to retract all the opinions which they had so often and so solemnly pronounced, and whether they would employ concession and submission as the most likely means to obtain an honourable, a secure, and a lasting peace.

The right honourable gentleman had in the course of his speech sedulously endeavoured to confound every question of danger to be apprehended from the success of the French, and the idea of a regular government, with a government founded on principles inimical to freedom, and with the same anxiety endeavoured to palliate all the excesses of the French, by stating them to have originated in an enthusiasm in the cause of freedom. Entertaining such sentiments as these, and having been from the first adverse to the origin and conduct of the war, it was natural for that right honourable gentleman to forget all our advantages, while he remembered, and often exaggerated, our misfortunes. It was natural for him to lessen the value of our conquests, and to depreciate the splendour of victories ; to represent our success as useless, but our defeat as fatal.— Openly professing such sentiments, the house would not be surprised at such consequences.



Those gentlemen who had studiously dwelt on every misfortune of the British arms, and on every circumstance of temporary difficulty, but had with equal care avoided to mention any instance of the success of our armies, or the prosperity of the country, might be disposed to approve of the motion, and of the removal of ministers from a situation which it was calculated to represent them as unqualified to hold. Other gentlemen, who looked to an honourable and lasting peace from a vigorous and effectual war, rather than from a dishonourable submission — those who did not impute a temporary interruption of success to want of judgment or to guilt — they would not, he was sure, withdraw their confidence from his Majesty's ministers, without proof of their want of capacity. It would not be to make room for those who had disapproved of the war from its commencement, and who, instead of meeting the crisis, would be disposed to shrink from it, but for persons better qualified to prosecute with vigour and effect, a war founded in justice, and connected with the most important interests of the country. Mr. Pitt concluded with moving, "That the house do now adjourn."

The question of adjournment was carried,

Ayes ..... 219

Noes ..... 63

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*May 27, 1795.*

ON a motion by Mr. Wilberforce, "That it is the opinion of this House, that the present circumstances of France ought not to preclude the government of this country from entertaining proposals for a general pacification; and that it is for the interest of Great Britain to make peace with France, provided it can be effected on fair terms, and in an honourable manner;"

MR. PITT delivered his sentiments as follows:

I shall certainly endeavour, Sir, to confine what I have to say to the real point under consideration, and must stand ex-

cused if I do not follow the right honourable gentleman \* who spoke last, in many of the points to which he adverted. I impute no blame to my honourable friend who has made this motion, though I lament and deplore that he has done so. He has acted, no doubt, from the fullest conviction that he was discharging his duty to his constituents and to the public at large. A great deal has been said this night about Holland being lost, without taking into consideration all the circumstances that belong to the case. It is not my business at present, but at any other time I should not be unwilling to discuss, whether it was not of immense advantage to Europe in general, that Holland was not added to France without a struggle, and which, but for the interference of this country, would have taken place two years ago. This union, after a long struggle, unfortunate I admit in the issue, has been formed chiefly from that country indulging unfounded hopes of peace, in a treaty of alliance, which has ended in their having been invaded and conquered; in their having submitted, being promised protection, and having been defrauded of four millions of money. Perhaps it may be better for them in the end, but it is certainly better for the state of the world, however unfortunate it may be for the inhabitants of that country, at the present moment, that they were united to France after a severe and unsuccessful struggle, and when Holland is no great acquisition to France, instead of being added to her, as a great accession, when she was in the zenith of her power. It has been argued this night, that this country entered upon the present just and necessary war with a great and powerful confederacy in Europe; and I admit that this confederacy is narrowed and diminished. But I would ask, whether, in discussing the question of peace and war, we have not furnished them with grounds to argue upon, which it is impossible they could have had without the existence of that confederacy? To look for negotiation at the present moment is premature, though I look to it at no remote

\* Mr. Fox.

period. I have no objection, were it connected with this business, to follow my honourable friend, and the right honourable gentleman, to the West Indies, to examine the efforts that have been made by this country, and compare them with those made in any former period; from which we should clearly see, whether greater exertions had ever been made, and whether the distresses in that quarter had not been aggravated by a great mortality, and other accidental causes.

But I come to the question immediately before us. I beg leave to consider what that question is, and I must say, that my honourable friend, in making his motion, suffered himself to be deceived in the manner of stating it; and this pervaded the whole of his argument. His statement was neither more nor less than this: Is a peace on fair and honourable terms preferable to the continuance of the war? We should not have been debating here so long, if this were the question; about this there can be no difference of opinion. But the question is, whether a peace on fair and honourable terms, which is the end of all war, is more likely to be attained by negotiation at the present moment, than by a continuance of the war? Are you more likely to arrive at a better and more secure peace with a reasonable prospect of permanency on fair and honourable terms, by a continuance of the war with energy and vigour, till a more favourable opening presents itself, by taking some step or other to encourage and invite negotiation? That is the question which puts away at once all the declamations on the advantages of peace, which nobody in this country will deny;—where the rapid effects of peace have healed wounds, infinitely greater than any we have experienced since the commencement of the present war, in repairing losses far more affecting the prosperity of the country than any we have sustained, and which were so vigorously experienced in the interval of a few years, as to make us almost forget the calamities of former wars.

Sir, that being the state of the question, I mean to submit to the house, that at the present moment, perseverance in the



contest is more wise and prudent, and more likely in the end to effect a safe, lasting, and honourable peace, than any attempt at negociation. My honourable friend does not chuse to state that this country ought to take the first steps to peace, and he claims great merit for his moderation in not going so far, but only that ministers ought to receive overtures. I beg leave to submit, whether this be not only taking the first step, but doing it in the most exceptionable manner. To say it is not an overture on our part, if we have received no intimation whatever from the government of France to treat, to say we shall be glad to treat, is what no man living will contend. Where the overture comes from the legislature of the country, it is attended with a degree of publicity which the right honourable gentleman admits is one of the merits of our constitution. But surely this mode of making overtures of peace is not the most convenient, inasmuch as it makes known the whole terms of peace to the enemy. It leaves no will to ministers to take advantage of any favourable circumstances that may occur. For that reason it is that the legislature does not usually interfere in such transactions, as the true state of the transactions is only fully understood by a few, and therefore it has been wisely committed to the executive government. Why has this country, which is so jealous of its rights and liberties, entrusted such prerogatives to the crown? Why is the making of peace and war, and other prerogatives which form the happiness of this constitution, entrusted to the king? Because it has been found, that the power of parliament was sufficient to prevent the royal prerogative from being carried beyond its proper limits. I say the question is then, whether you will step forward, and assume this power of the crown at a crisis of peculiar delicacy?

The right honourable gentleman who spoke last, was of opinion that the French convention, from the publicity of its proceedings, bore a nearer resemblance to the British constitution, than the constitution of any other country. In this comparison, I trust, it was not meant to be carried any farther, as if

the interests of this country were to be discussed in one popular assembly. I hope the right honourable gentleman is not so much in love with France. I think the right honourable gentleman took up that idea rather hastily. I am by no means certain, nor is it worth while here to examine, whether a despotic government, or an anarchical republic, like that of France, most nearly resembles the constitution of Great Britain, which is removed at an equal distance from both extremes.

The publicity of the proceedings of the French convention has been the source of outrage, horror, and disgust, to every feeling heart. That publicity has been a faithful recorder, and an accurate witness of the enormity of their proceedings. The question is, whether we are to take the first step towards negotiation, or to go on, trusting to the executive government to take the opportunity of the first favourable moment for negotiation, and in the mean time strengthening the hands of that government, to persevere with vigour in the contest in which we are engaged. We have been told, that although this question has been several times brought forward, it has never been directly disposed of; it has never been directly negatived. I contend that it has in effect been directly negatived. For when the motion was made some time ago, an amendment was made to the motion, stating, that we were resolved to persevere in the contest, trusting that his Majesty would seize the first favourable opportunity that presented for treating with security. I beg to know, whether that which was done with deliberation, was not negativing the motion. Subsequent to that, this question was discussed again and again, and this house on those occasions came to a resolution, that it did not conceive, under the present circumstances of the countries, negotiation was a measure expedient to be adopted.

But another question here arises. Have the circumstances and situation of the country materially altered since the last motion on this subject, or since my honourable friend first found himself an advocate for negotiation? Has the posture

of affairs varied since that time, so as to make negotiation more eligible at the present moment than it was at any former period? I heard my honourable friend state one fact on this business, which no evidence can contradict. I heard him with pleasure state, that the situation of France was now so weakened and exhausted, as to make peace with that government, though not secure, yet, in consequence of that weakness, attended with a considerable degree of security. That something more of this security exists at the present moment, I not only admit, but contend that the prospect is improving every day, and that this becomes more and more ascertained; as I shall state before I sit down. But is this a reason why we should negotiate at this moment? I think not. From facts that are notorious, from things known to the world, there is now a general feeling that there is, comparatively speaking, a sense of security in the country, when compared with the alarming uneasiness which some time ago prevailed. The enemy have not been able to avail themselves of their success and acquisitions, nor have they acquired solid and substantial strength. The natural anxiety of the people of this country has led them to remark the progress of the decay, decline, and ruin of the enemy, as being more rapid than they could have foreseen. When this business was formerly discussed, it was used as a very considerable argument against negotiation, that from our situation then, we could not hope to treat with France on terms of equality: that our affairs since the commencement of the war were in so unfavourable a state, that we could not reasonably hope to obtain terms of equality, or any thing fair and honourable. Is not this argument very considerably strengthened at this moment, when you compare the state of this country and France? Exhausted and wearied with the addition of your own weakness, will you give up the contest in despair? We should then, like Holland, have to consider what indemnity France would expect of us. I state this as a practical objection, and wholly independent of any question on the security of negotiation. Those who argue for peace, con-



sider our situation as rendered more fit for negociation in this way:—that we have lost our allies, by which we are reduced to such a state of weakness, that we must listen to peace ; and now that our allies have deserted us, it is unnecessary to obtain their consent. We formerly refused to treat with France, because we were satisfied she was unable to maintain that peace and amity that ought to prevail among neutral nations. Gentlemen have chosen to forget all the arguments used with regard to acknowledging the republic of France. We refused to treat with M. Chauvelin after the unfortunate murder of Louis XVI. We refused to acknowledge a government that had been reeking with the blood of their sovereign. Was not that an objection not to acknowledge them at that period? The murder of the king preceded but a very few days the declaration of war against this country.

The next argument is, whether you would dishonour yourself by acknowledging a republic that might endanger your own independence, and which made a public profession of principles which went to destroy the independence of every nation of Europe? I say, I will not acknowledge such a republic. The question here is but simply whether you will acknowledge so as to treat with it? It is not, nor has it been, since the commencement of the war, the interest of England, not from any one circumstance, but from taking all circumstances together, to institute a negociation with the ruling powers now existing in France.

As to the declaration of the emperor to the diet, if it is authentic, that he should be happy to enter into a negociation for peace, I beg leave to say, this declaration must be supposed to bind the emperor in no other capacity than as head of the empire ; and I am sure they cannot, and will not state that that precludes him, as duke of Austria, or king of Bohemia, from performing any agreement he may chuse to enter into, on his own separate account, in those capacities. As the head of the empire, he might, from the present situation of that country, think it wise and expedient to go beyond the line he may chalk out to himself as a sovereign prince and king, as king of Bohe-

mia and archduke of Austria. There may be circumstances to induce him, as the head of the empire, to wish to open a negotiation with France, rather than run the risk of a separate negotiation, through the medium of the king of Prussia, contrary to the constitution of the Germanic body. One of the next points relied upon, and imputed as blame to ministers, was the circumstance of the war in La Vendée and with the Chouans being at an end. I do not see how that circumstance can attach any blame to government. It has been stated, that the inhabitants of La Vendée have submitted to the French republic. Whoever has conversed with gentlemen coming from France, has been made acquainted with the situation of the inhabitants of La Vendée and the Chouans, as well as from the Paris newspapers. They will do well to consider, whether the French government can have any degree of confidence, that they can reap the least advantage from that union. The advantages of the peace in that quarter have been entirely in favour of La Vendée and Brittany, and not of the republic; the inhabitants have gained by the treaty, and lost nothing. The republic has no right to any accession of strength from this district of the kingdom. Were they subject to requisitions? or did they furnish recruits for the army? or did they increase the treasure of the country? By the articles of their submission to the laws of the republic, if they are reported truly, they are in fact an independent government, from which what are called patriots are excluded. The state of La Vendée was directly the reverse of that of Holland; and if that country was not an accession of strength to the republic, is it not a confession of the weakness of the government, that they found themselves under the necessity, notwithstanding all their splendid success, to enter into such a treaty as a sovereign would never have entered into but from necessity?

There is another circumstance which has been relied upon, and which I must not pass over in silence. Among other events of the day, we see that Holland and France have entered into an alliance; and that Holland is to furnish France with twelve ships of the line, and eighteen frigates. The present state of

Holland makes that circumstance more favourable for this country than we had reason to expect it would have been when Holland was over-run by the French.

The question is, whether the state of France is not so weak; whether the distractions and disturbances of the country, and the discontents of the people, are not so great, as are likely to lead to some change or new order of things, more favourable than any that has hitherto appeared?

First, as to the weakness of France. We have been told by the right honourable gentleman, that there was no appearance in France of the relaxation of its efforts; that the reign of terror ended with the month of July last; and subsequent to that period they have been as successful as ever. But surely it is not very wonderful if the operations of that great and extraordinary machine had wound up the whole of that extensive empire, by all the men who were put in a state of requisition, and by all the meretricious treasure that was amassed; if so many causes operating so long, the effects were not to cease as immediately as the causes. The effects in their operation survive the causes; but have the French acquired fresh vigour? Whoever has taken any pains to look at the number and efforts of their armies, and state of the provisions and magazines, and attends to the manner in which requisitions have been carried on; whoever reads the accounts the members of the convention give of themselves; whoever reads their speeches; whoever trusts to their own account of themselves;—these all prove that the vigour and exertion of that country have been evidently diminishing.

In the next place, look at the state of their assignats, which for a long time has been the subject of a great deal of anxious attention to the convention. They have been employed almost in a perpetual contest about two things,—to make a constitution, and to raise their credit, by preventing an unlimited number of assignats entering into circulation. They therefore passed a decree to withdraw a certain number of them to raise their credit. The nominal value of assignats was only 25*l.* per cent. At pre-



sent they are somewhat less than 5*l*. per cent. Their expenditure is incredible; last month it amounted to twenty-seven millions sterling, which is more than is wanted by Great Britain in the course of a year. This expense amounts to three hundred and twenty-four millions sterling per annum, which exceeds the whole national debt of Great Britain. The commerce of that country is totally extinguished, and a portion of bankruptcy mixes itself with every transaction.

The next article is the price of provisions, respecting which I have received a great deal of authentic information within these few days, indeed I may say within these few hours; and the price of provisions is so very high, and scarcity prevails to such a degree, as must stop all great and extensive operations.

In the next place, I doubt very much whether the provisions for the French army and navy will in future be so regularly supplied as they formerly have been. I have accounts of provisions being re-landed from on board some of the ships at Brest; and the city of Paris has been supplied by pittances from the army on the Rhine. Expressions of discontent are not confined to individuals, but are general, and such as come home to the door of every individual in France. What will be the effect of this complicated pressure, how long it may be continued, or what order of things may ultimately rise out of it, I shall not pretend to say. But I think it may produce, and probably at no great distance of time, some new order of things, more friendly to a general pacification, and to a regular intercourse with the other established powers of Europe. Such is the genuine prospect for all the countries of Europe, for an order of things more satisfactory than we have seen at any former period. It is owing to your perseverance in forcing them, and to which they are unequal, that they would willingly accept of peace. But because you have such a prospect at this moment, you are by no means certain that a safe and honourable peace could be obtained. That is, at this moment, premature; a continuance of your per-

severance some time longer, will in all probability produce that happy effect.

Compare the situation and resources of this country, feeling for the burthens of the country, which must be felt by the poor and industrious to a certain extent, and deploring their necessity, as they must obstruct the increasing wealth of the country. Look also at the manufactures and trade and revenue, and compare it with the expense of the war. Compare the annual expenditure of twenty or twenty-five millions sterling, to the enormous sum of twenty-seven millions sterling per month, or three hundred and twenty-four millions per annum, the sum yearly expended by France. After you have made these comparisons, tell me whether you will lay aside your exertions, under the peculiar circumstances in which you are now placed. You have laid on taxes unprecedented in their amount, but at the same time having the satisfaction to know that they are borne by the inhabitants of this country without any material severe pressure. You are provided therefore with the most ample and liberal supplies for the present campaign. But is that the case with France? No. Every month, every week, is an additional strain of the new machine, and they are not provided with any of that enormous expense which I have mentioned, but must raise it all by forced means, by requisitions, by robbery, and plunder. I have trespassed too long on the patience of the house. I conclude by observing again, that I have to hope for a more favourable order of things, and I have no reason to be satisfied with any attempt at negociation at this moment: but by a vigorous prosecution of the war for a short time longer, we have every reasonable prospect that we shall be able to procure for ourselves a solid, permanent, and honourable peace.

The resolution was rejected: the House dividing on the order of the day, moved by Mr. Windham,

Ayes ..... 201

Noes ..... 86

October 29, 1795.

His Majesty this day opened the session with a most gracious speech\* from the throne.

After the address (in the usual form) had been moved by the Earl of Dalkeith, and seconded by the Honourable Mr. Stewart,

Mr. Fox, in a speech of considerable length, inveighing severely against the assertions of ministry, as fallacious and delusive, moved an amendment to the address, "setting forth the disastrous result of the measures hitherto pursued, and imploring his Majesty to take immediate steps for bringing about a peace with France, whatever might be the present or future form of her internal government; looking for indemnity, where alone indemnity could be found, in the restoration of industry, plenty and tranquillity at home."

Mr. Pitt rose in reply to Mr. Fox.

He began by observing, that no question had ever occurred in the history of this country, which involved in it more circumstances peculiarly connected with its interest, honour, and safety, than the question which had been proposed to their de-

\* "My Lords and Gentlemen,

"It is a great satisfaction to me to reflect, that, notwithstanding many events unfavourable to the common cause, the prospect resulting from the general situation of affairs has, in many important respects, been materially improved in the course of the present year.

"In Italy, the threatened invasion of the French has been prevented; and they have been driven back from a considerable part of the line of coast which they had occupied: There is also reason to hope that the recent operations of the Austrian army have checked the progress which they had made on the side of Germany, and frustrated the offensive projects which they were pursuing in that quarter.

"The successes which have attended their military operations in other parts of the campaign, and the advantages which they have derived from the conclusion of separate treaties with some of the powers who were engaged in the war, are far from compensating the evils which they experience from its continuance. The destruction of their commerce, the diminution of their maritime power, and the unparalleled embarrassment and distress of their internal situation, have produced the impression which was naturally to be



termination that night by his noble friend, together with the amendment that had been made to it by the right honourable gentleman opposite to him. That amendment contained a proposition so extraordinary in itself, that he could not believe the

expected; and a general sense appears to prevail throughout France, that the only relief from the increasing pressure of these difficulties must arise from the restoration of peace, and the establishment of some settled system of government.

“ The distraction and anarchy which have so long prevailed in that country, have led to a crisis, of which it is as yet impossible to foresee the issue; but which must, in all human probability, produce consequences highly important to the interests of Europe. Should this crisis terminate in any order of things compatible with the tranquillity of other countries, and affording a reasonable expectation of security and permanence in any treaty which might be concluded, the appearance of a disposition to negotiate for general peace on just and suitable terms will not fail to be met, on my part, with an earnest desire to give it the fullest and speediest effect. But I am persuaded you will agree with me, that nothing is so likely to ensure and accelerate this desirable end, as to shew that we are prepared for either alternative, and are determined to prosecute the war with the utmost energy and vigour, until we have the means of concluding, in conjunction with our allies, such a peace as the justice of our cause and the situation of the enemy may entitle us to expect.

“ With this view I am continuing to make the greatest exertions for maintaining and improving our naval superiority, and for carrying on active and vigorous operations in the West Indies, in order to secure and extend the advantages which we have gained in that quarter, and which are so nearly connected with our commercial resources and maritime strength.

“ I rely with full confidence on the continuance of your firm and zealous support, on the uniform bravery of my fleets and armies, and on the fortitude, perseverance, and public spirit of all ranks of my people.

“ The acts of hostility committed by the United Provinces, under the influence and control of France, have obliged me to treat them as in a state of war with this country.

“ The fleet which I have employed in the North Seas has received the most cordial and active assistance from the naval force furnished by the Empress of Russia, and has been enabled effectually to check the operations of the enemy in that quarter.

“ I have concluded engagements of defensive alliance with the two Imperial courts; and the ratifications of the treaty of commerce with the

right honourable gentleman was serious in making it. It was neither more nor less than this. After observing the supposed state of universal degradation and disappointment, to which we had been reduced in consequence of the war, we were advised at this moment to sue on our part for peace, without being informed how the negotiation was to be conducted, or what indemnity this country was to receive. That amendment, therefore, only held out the mockery of returning to a state of security and peace. Such was the nature and state of the question which the right honourable gentleman had brought before them; a proposition which, according to the sacred rules of parliament, any gentleman might bring forward *without personal*

United States of America, which I announced to you last year, have now been exchanged. I have directed copies of these treaties to be laid before you.

*“ Gentlemen of the House of Commons,*

“ It is matter of deep concern to me, that the exigencies of the public service will require further additions to the heavy burthens which have been unavoidably imposed on my people. I trust that their pressure will, in some degree, be alleviated by the flourishing state of our commerce and manufactures, and that our expenses, though necessarily great in their amount, will, under the actual circumstances of the war, admit of considerable diminution in comparison with those of the present year.

*“ My Lords and Gentlemen,*

“ I have observed for some time past with the greatest anxiety the very high price of grain, and that anxiety is increased by the apprehension that the produce of the wheat harvest in the present year may not have been such as effectually to relieve my people from the difficulties with which they have had to contend. The spirit of order and submission to the laws which, with very few exceptions, has manifested itself under this severe pressure, will, I am sure, be felt by you as an additional incentive to apply yourselves with the utmost diligence to the consideration of such measures as may tend to alleviate the present distress, and to prevent, as far as possible, the renewal of similar embarrassments in future. Nothing has been omitted, on my part, that appeared likely to contribute to this end; and you may be assured of my hearty concurrence in whatever regulations the wisdom of parliament may adopt, on a subject so peculiarly interesting to my people, whose welfare will ever be the object nearest my heart.”

*responsibility*, and upon which therefore he could retort upon the right honourable gentleman no threat of impeachment; but if he were a minister, and were to bring forward such a proposition, he would deserve impeachment more than any man who ever disgraced the country.

Mr. Pitt begged first to take a view of the general proposition, and leading points of contest in the address, leaving out of the question some extraneous topics. He wished to confine his attention to the address that had been moved by his noble friend, and to contrast it with the amendment. The first leading point in the king's speech, and the proposition which had been laid before that house for their concurrence was this: "That notwithstanding the many events unfavourable to the common cause, the prospect resulting from the general situation of affairs has in many important respects been materially improved in the course of the present war;" The first proposition therefore to be proved was, that on considering the relative state of the belligerent powers since the commencement of the present war, notwithstanding our reverses and disappointments, the prospect arising out of the general situation of affairs had been materially improved. In the first place, before he entered into any detail upon the subject, he begged leave to ask, what was the period comprised in this proposition? It included the space between the opening of the last session of parliament, and the moment at which he was then speaking. He wished to ask every candid man, with what feelings and with what expectations they entered that house at the commencement of the last session? He then desired them to ask themselves, what were their own impressions, and what was their belief of the general impressions of the country, with regard to general security, at the present moment, compared with what they were last year. He hoped the gentlemen on the other side of the house were not wholly forgetful what a melancholy picture they had formerly drawn of the situation of this country; how deplorable, how dreadful, how unprecedented our calamitous situation was at the commencement of the last session. They now seemed desi-



rous to forget those exaggerated statements of last year, and to apply them to the present. He hoped, when a fair comparison was made between these two periods, no candid man would suppose that he meant to insult the people of England, when he used the word *satisfaction*. He again declared, that on a general review of the state of this country ten months ago, and at the moment when he was speaking, he felt no small degree of satisfaction.

But, he said, he must go somewhat farther, and must state plain, distinct, and solid grounds of satisfaction. He wished to observe, that there were essential objects, of which they might be deprived, and from the importance of which they had been led into the war. His grounds of satisfaction were these: allowing for all the victories the enemy had gained in different quarters, allowing for every advantage they had obtained; allowing also for all the calamities whatever which might have befallen this country or our allies, he begged of the house to look at the present principles of the war, to examine it in all its parts, and they would easily observe the grounds of his satisfaction, and the state of our improvement. They could not fail to perceive the enemy's reduced means of prosecuting the war. The enemy was now in a situation to give us fair prospects of their being, perhaps, soon more capable of giving reasonable security of engagements of peace. They were now in a situation in which they felt a greater necessity for peace, and in which it was apparent they had a much stronger disposition for it. If he was right in that proposition, which he should endeavour to prove, was it to insult the country to express the satisfaction which he felt from these circumstances which he had just stated? Many observations which he meant to make in the illustration of the subject, had been most ably anticipated by his noble friend who moved the address, and by his right honourable friend who seconded it.

The first question that presented itself, was, whether or not the means of the enemy were reduced for carrying on the war. He had no doubt but he should make out that proposition to the

satisfaction of every unprejudiced mind. At an early period of the right honourable gentleman's speech, he seemed for a considerable time to imagine that the only ground of satisfaction which he (Mr. Pitt) had to state, was, that the enemy was less capable of carrying on the war on account of the want of subsistence. The right honourable gentleman had also made a number of observations respecting the high price of grain at home. This was a subject to which, before he sat down, he should beg leave to call the attention of the house. He did not mean to rest solely on that ground of satisfaction which had been stated by the right honourable gentleman. It had been said by him, "That the old story of the depreciation of assignats was an argument of no weight; that, considering the state to which they were at present reduced, it was precisely the same as if they had been ten times lower; that they were equal to nothing; and that as the enemy had relaxed none of their military operations on that account, it was the clearest proof they could go on without them." At the commencement of the last session, the assignats had been truly stated by the right honourable gentleman to be only about one fourth of their nominal value. When this old story came now to be repeated, it was this:—At the commencement of the last session of parliament, the value of assignats was from 20 to 25 per cent. At the present moment they were only *one and a half per cent.* viz. for one hundred assignats of nominal value, only one and a half were received; consequently, they were now only about one sixteenth of the value they were last year. There was therefore some variety in this old story. There was a difference in the account. There was also an uniformity in this account, for every time he spoke of them there was a successive depression. The system of terror produced miraculous effects on this subject. For the space of a twelvemonth it kept assignats up at a par. When that system was destroyed, they returned to that state of depression in which it found them. They were at present only one sixteenth part of the value they were at, ten months ago. If any gentleman should ask him what the consequences

of this great depreciation were, they were these ;—Suppose any individual in France, ten months ago, had received any number of assignats as the price of his labour, or in payment of a debt, and that he had laid up those assignats as the means of his future subsistence, he would find at this moment that they were only one sixteenth part of the value of what they were at the commencement of the last session. This was the state of the private fortune of every individual in France. The prodigality of their system forced into circulation between six and seven millions, which was equal to 280 millions sterling, and which was three or four times more than the amount of all the money in France in its richest state, and which its commerce wanted for its circulating *medium*. At that time these assignats produced the highest degree of difficulty and embarrassment ; and notwithstanding all the advantages the French had gained during the course of the present year, notwithstanding all the deductions that had been made, assignats were equal to only one sixteenth part of their former value. This was confessed by every man who had written in France ;—it was confessed by every man who had spoken in France ;—it was admitted by every man who thought in Europe. At present they had assignats in circulation to the incredible amount of 720 millions sterling. The number of assignats was still increasing ; so that the repeated increase of new issues was to be added to that immense sum. The enemy had therefore to face another campaign under these circumstances. Supposing the other powers of Europe were desirous to put them to the hard necessity of trying the experiment, he firmly believed in his conscience, that the prodigal resources of their system could not be supported, unless by the restoration of the system of terror. Was he to consider all these circumstances as nothing ? Most certainly not.

But there were some favourable circumstances in the situation of the enemy, and he had no desire to conceal them. He had no difficulty to state the equivocal conduct of the king of Prussia. The French could also disband the two armies which they had withdrawn from two different quarters of Spain, ex-



cept in so far as those armies had been employed by different diversions. On account of the peace they had concluded with the king of Prussia, they might be enabled to a certain degree to contend with a much smaller army, than when they had to oppose the whole of the confederacy. Yet it must be observed, that for every pound sterling that was formerly paid to each man in such an army, they must give sixteen pounds sterling at the commencement of the present year. The depreciation of assignats was constantly increasing, and not only increasing, but increasing in a compound ratio of an increasing proportion. The only question was, whether, as these assignats would very soon, in all probability, be totally inefficient, there were any other visible means of maintaining their operations. It would certainly be very rash in any man to hazard a decided opinion on this point. Without pretending to give such an opinion on a subject so large and complicated, and where it was extremely difficult to judge with precision on the general result of all circumstances, he had no difficulty in stating, that he saw the greatest perplexities arising from this depression of assignats, pervading every individual in the state, and bringing nothing, as the French themselves had said, but misery and paper into every corner of the country.

That circumstance had been so pressing upon every man in the country, that if they had had the means of substituting any other less dangerous and less wasteful expedient, what greater necessity could there be for the application of such a remedy? Every financier in every department of the government had declared, that the safety of their republic depended on the regular payment of the army. He said he took this account of the subject from the records of France. He had taken it from the accounts of some of the most remarkable ministers who had appeared during the different periods of the revolution: some of them had been removed from the situation; and from the present situation of France, it was probable some of them might be restored. He observed that these ministers, at a time when assignats were far short of what they were at present, when the depression was only one half of their nominal value, de-

clared, that unless an instant remedy was applied, the most serious consequences were to be apprehended ; and, that it was absolutely necessary to raise the credit of these assignats by taking a number of them out of circulation, and giving security for the value of those that remained. He was ashamed, he said, of wearying the house on a subject that was so clear and obvious ; but he hoped he should be excused when it was recollected that it was extremely interesting and important. These resources might last a little longer or a shorter time before they produced their final effect ; but they had in them the seeds of decay, and the inevitable cause of a violent dissolution. As it might be asked, what they had been able to propose as a remedy, he wished that every gentleman in that house had had an opportunity of perusing a plan which had been published, three months ago, by a person of no inconsiderable abilities, M. Montesquieu. According to him there were thirteen millions of assignats in circulation, which were five millions less than the convention had since acknowledged. That made a difference of no less than two hundred millions sterling. That gentleman proposed two things ; first, to take out of circulation an immense part of those assignats, and to give a solid and adequate pledge to the public, in order to secure those that remained in circulation being at par. That circumstance would enable them to carry on the war with vigour. He said it would carry him too far to enter into a detail of this plan ; but every man must be satisfied of the desperate state of that country, when they heard the nature of the remedy. They proposed taking out of circulation 1500 millions of livres, by appropriating for money which had not yet been received of those who had purchased of the public the estates of the emigrants, and other lands which had been confiscated. In other words, those assignats were to be discharged by bad debts. The pledge given to them was, that on an average they were to receive in land one fifth part of their value, and if the rents should not be paid them, they were to receive interest for their paper. But it was observable, that that paper was not transferable

from hand to hand, as was the case with the stocks in this country.

Such then was the state of France, where such a remedy had been proposed, and that remedy to this hour had never been applied. In the last days of the convention another plan was proposed. A few days ago, Vernier proposed as a remedy, that the plates should be destroyed, and it was decreed that no more should be issued, provided other means could be found to carry on the war. To supply the place of assignats, metallic pieces were to be introduced into circulation; but it was not explained whether these were to pass for more than their intrinsic value, which if they did, they were only metallic assignats, instead of assignats made of paper. If those metallic pieces were to pass at their value, no mention was made how they were to be procured. They had given no information how precious metals to that immense extent were to be obtained. It was unnecessary for him to state how a nation destitute of specie, and of the precious metals, could procure them. A nation destitute of gold and silver could only procure those precious metals in exchange for the exportation of those productions it had raised from its own soil, after leaving at home sufficient for its necessary consumption; and after procuring all the other articles of consumption, which its own soil did not produce. The eternal law of things proved that this was the only mode of procuring the precious metals. Their commerce was ruined. What was lost by the destruction of the commerce of their colonies, of the Levant, and the loss of their internal manufactures, particularly those of Lyons, had been estimated at many millions sterling.

The causes of their necessary importation were also to be taken into the account. He was ready to admit their successes on the Rhine. At first view, it appeared impossible they could have faced the Austrian army which was so formidable in that quarter. He admitted, and admitted with feelings of regret, their having been enabled to make so calamitous a use of the advantages they had obtained. The expedition to Quiberon-



bay, and the hard fate of the unfortunate emigrants who were fighting for him whom they conceived to be their lawful monarch, was to be considered by us as a calamity, independent of its effects. Every man's personal feelings were interested in that event: every man in that house, and in the country, who was possessed of the principles of loyalty and honour, must feel regret. He said he would admit the enemy had been only kept on the defensive on the side of Italy; but he must desire the house to look at the enemy during the course of the present campaign, and they would clearly see, that, notwithstanding the diminished number of their opponents, and though their successes were great and many, the internal situation of France was most wretched and deplorable. They had not made their attempt to cross the Rhine till almost the close of the campaign. It was not easy to find any other cause for that but that they had relaxed in their energy. It was difficult to conceive how their vast machinery could be directed, or how the power of the state could be supported without assignats. If they were taken out of circulation, they could not command the labour of their own subjects either for civil or military operations. Although this circumstance had not as yet produced its effect, it was evidently approaching towards it. The instruments of government in France were so numerous, that in any other country they would form a nation. There was another thing worthy of remark, that to many persons employed by the state, they had been obliged to allot a number of articles of necessity in kind. What would be the next point, when they were obliged to hold out imperfect means of subsistence to a successful and victorious army? They had been compelled to add one-seventh in money to the daily pay of their soldiers, who received by that means ten times equal the amount of their pay in assignats. He directed the attention of the house to consider the effect of that measure. No sooner had it been adopted in the French armies, than it was attended with this consequence, that a soldier found himself a richer man than his officer. He hoped he had not wasted the time of the

house by stating these observations, which seemed fully to confirm all the reasonings and speculations he had formed on the subject. Taking therefore into the account all the victories obtained by France, and also their external glory of foreign acquisitions; when he considered the state of their internal resources, and their inability to carry on the war for another campaign, he had no doubt but the situation of things was materially improved.

Mr. Pitt said he must be very short on those articles which still remained. If the enemy had entertained the idea that they were under a greater necessity, from the situation of their affairs, to procure peace, they would naturally have a stronger disposition to obtain it. He contended, that all these circumstances evidently arose out of the present situation of France; which led him to observe, that the prospect of the present situation of affairs in France might afford more reasonable means of effecting peace with security. Such were the present dispositions, the present principles professed, and acted upon in France, as they appeared from recent transactions, compared with any other period since the revolution. He desired the house to consider the manner in which the next constitution of France had been ushered into the world. There were certainly many circumstances in the present situation of France, favourable for a disposition to treat for peace, though it might still be made a question, whether there were enough to make it advisable or practicable for us to treat. We ought to recollect, continued Mr. Pitt, that this new constitution was ushered in with an invective against all former periods of the revolution, with a philosophical investigation of the causes which had produced such a succession of evil, strongly reprobating the idea of building up constitutions from the ground, solemnly recanting those errors into which they had been led, from the prevalence of chimerical notions, and asking pardon of God and man for the crimes they had committed, under the impulse of blind enthusiasm. They now announced their intention to be

no longer led astray by theory, but to resort to practicable principles and the lessons of experience, renouncing for ever the wild scheme of forming abstract systems, not only for France, but for the whole of Europe. This surely was something. But are they yet in a state with respect to which we have such means of satisfactory information, that we ought in the present moment to come to any declaration? You need only to be reminded, that the day before yesterday, unless it was postponed, was fixed as the day on which their new constitution was to be put in activity, on which the power of the convention was to expire, and a new set of men to come into the legislature. In a few days we shall know what constitution has been adopted, and what men are in power. You will judge, then, whether at such a period it becomes us as statesmen to announce our own weakness and inability to continue the contest, and to declare our readiness immediately to negotiate, without so much as knowing who are to receive the declaration. So absurd, so preposterous a supposition I could never have believed to have been made, if it had not been actually brought forward. The right honourable gentleman says, that until ministers come to such a declaration he will not believe them to be sincere in their wishes for peace. For my own part I will submit to any imputation, however harsh; to any opinion, however severe, rather than consent, by such a measure, to betray the interests and sacrifice the honour and dignity of the country. [Mr. Pitt here charged Mr. Fox with not having accurately quoted the words of his Majesty's speech at the opening of last session; and denied that there was any equivocation or evasion in the speech which had been just read.]

Ministers have been guilty of no act of reservation; they have been consistent in the whole of their conduct and declarations. Was it possible for them to foresee the events which have taken place since last session? I have no hesitation to declare, under what circumstances I would think it advisable for this country to treat with France. Whether the new constitution



may have been put in activity, or may have been postponed, we are yet ignorant; but should that constitution, in the form in which it has been decreed, have been examined, and put in activity with such acquiescence of the nation, as to enable their representatives to speak on behalf of the people of France, I then have no difficulty in saying, from that time all objections to the form of that government, and to the principles of that government—all objections to them as obstacles to negociation will be at an end. I will also state, with the same frankness, that should that be the termination, whether it will then lead to the issue of competent security, and a reasonable satisfaction to this country, must depend on the terms. If, under those circumstances, by any precipitate and premature desire for peace, from any disposition to under-rate our real strength, or any want of fortitude to bear what I admit to be real difficulties; if we should overlook the ten thousand times more complicated distress of the enemy, and, by stooping to the humiliation which I now deprecate, put an end to the advantages they give us, for obtaining peace on just and suitable terms, that would in my opinion be the most fatal event that could possibly happen. If, I say, you submit to any such humiliation, you must look to a much less satisfactory issue of the contest than I firmly expect, or than we might have obtained at different periods, or before other powers were wanting to themselves in shrinking from the common cause. I shall ever lament if, uniting in a combination against a conspiracy hostile to civilized Europe, if, arming in the cause of exiled orders, of degraded religion, of insulted humanity, we shall thus tamely abandon the contest. If we are true to ourselves, much may yet be accomplished. It will, at least, be said, that if any power stood in the breach, saved the rest of Europe, and gave time to those principles, which threatened universal ruin, to spend their fury, it was a country enjoying a mild and free government, supported during the contest on the basis of public credit and individual industry. We shall see France reduced

to a wreck, while that credit and industry steer this country to the port of tranquillity and safety. The right honourable gentleman says, that we have forfeited our pledge, when we last year declared our readiness to treat with a government in France capable of maintaining the accustomed relations of peace and amity. He adduces the conduct which they have observed in their neutrality to America, Denmark, and Sweden, as instances that they are capable of maintaining those relations. That argument, I must remark, would have equally well applied in any year of the war, and was expressly answered last year when the declaration was made. I ask, whether they did not observe their neutrality in America, by endeavouring to excite a conspiracy in its bosom, in order to overturn the government? And, whether they were not guilty of other instances of a notorious breach of faith to Denmark and Sweden, though these powers did not think prudent to resent it? The case of the king of Prussia was fully argued last session.

It is not surprising, that in their exhausted situation, they should have been disposed to avail themselves of the opportunity which peace with that monarch afforded them to contract the scale of their operations, and that, with respect to him, they should have practised a forbearance so essential to their interests. Another circumstance has been exultingly brought forward, that of the elector of Hanover having signed a treaty with France. Let us suppose the elector of Hanover to have nothing to do with the king of England, and then consider whether the government of a country, destitute of population and resources, sufficient to enable them to resist an overwhelming and impetuous enemy close upon their frontiers, and menacing their immediate existence, were not, from every motive, bound to prefer even an insecure peace to a more pressing danger. But is this example to apply to a country in circumstances entirely different, not only not threatened by any pressing danger, but possessing resources to make a stand against the utmost power of the enemy, perhaps, even to weary out their efforts, and exhaust their means of hostility? But it would

seem as if the intention were to confound the sacred and august personage who fills the throne of this country with the elector of Hanover. If such really be the intention, let me observe, that the rules and forms of this house require that no notice shall be taken of that illustrious personage except through his ministers, and the same thing ought to prevail with respect to foreign princes; because the elector of Hanover went to war on grounds, in which this country had no concern, would that be deemed any reason why we ought to imitate the example? All such reasoning must be partial and fallacious; and were it to be brought forward on another occasion, the gentlemen on the other side would be the first to remonstrate against it. I again repeat, that we ought not to choose the moments of the expiring government of France, in order to make such a declaration as is now proposed. If the new constitution be accepted, there can be then no objection to treat, if the terms shall be such as are consistent with the honour and interests of this country. It is urged by the right honourable gentleman, that the French, last year, shewed a disposition for peace. That they did shew a disposition for peace with other countries, is certain, but it was only to prosecute their views of enmity against England with more vigour and effect. Their means were diminished, but their fury had not subsided. This year they discover a very different temper; every word and every groan they utter, breathes only peace, and a general peace. They are sensible that peace alone can restore to them the wreck and remnant of their power.

The right honourable gentleman has told the house, he does not wish to deal in encomiums on constitutions of which he has had no experience. That right honourable gentleman, however, on a former occasion was not quite so cautious, when he broke out upon "that glorious fabric of human wisdom," which consisted of little more, as the French themselves have admitted, than subversion. I now hope the right honourable gentleman has borrowed something of their doubt and hesitation. They have learned important lessons from the misfortunes they



have suffered ; and I trust the right honourable gentleman will be satisfied with having seen them in France, without wishing to have them tried near home.

The only way to judge of a government is to judge of it fully and fairly in all its bearings : how far the nature of that government may affect the internal circumstances of that country, must be left to the decision of experience ; but it can at one glance be perceived, whether a government avows the doctrine of hostility to all others, or whether it is of the nature of a military democracy — the most restless in itself, and the most dangerous to its neighbours ; its character in these respects, may be judged of from the materials of which it is composed, and the temper with which it is embraced. If it is resorted to by a people tired with a repetition of sufferings, and strongly impressed with the necessity of peace, even though it is destined to undergo a long succession of changes, it will afford more security for negotiation, because it is accompanied with a greater sense of weakness, and a more ardent wish of repose.

The right honourable gentleman went into a declamation on the subject of wars against opinions ; he compared them to the system adopted by inquisitions. If he meant wars against opinions, resting in the conscience of the individual, and producing no effects on society, he might have spared himself the labour, such wars have not for many years found any advocate in this house ; but what will he say, if the opinions against which we contend are those of the Inquisition — those of men seeking to establish what they deem the only lawful government by fire and sword ? — Will he not admit that we have armed justly, to resist the proceedings of such an inquisition, and that, by exhausting their force, and subduing the malignity of their opinions, we have rendered to society an essential service ? There are many other points to which I ought to advert, were the hour not so late, or my strength less exhausted. I contend, that we have already gone as far in explaining the terms on which we are ready to negotiate, as it is possible for us to go, consistent with sound policy or national honour

There is another question, of which the practical decision may be difficult, but too interesting to be omitted, the high price of grain. I agree with the right honourable gentleman, that there is no point more difficult to be rendered a subject of legislative regulation, and, at the same time, none which ought to be more speedily investigated. It has been said, that ministers made light of this calamity, when it was last year presented to their notice. One circumstance it was impossible for them to foresee, that in consequence of the season, the harvest would be delayed a month later than might have been expected. The right honourable gentleman speaks of this as a severe charge against ministers. Does he suppose that we could have remedied the evil, by prematurely withdrawing from the war? When gentlemen talk of the quantity of grain consumed by military operations, I wish they would first ascertain what quantity really was consumed; what number of troops, who would otherwise have been fed at home, were maintained by foreign grain; and what were the supplies derived from the vessels that were detained—these are points on which they ought to be well satisfied, if they have any regard for the tranquillity of the country, and for that good understanding, which ought to prevail between the rich and the poor; and if they are not actuated by the sentiments akin to those which have been so clamorously avowed without doors, and which ought never to be heard within these walls. I suppose one honourable gentleman\* forgot he was in this house, when alluding to the effect which had been mentioned by an honourable friend of mine, as likely to result in France, from the distress of the country, he said, that our prospect was, indeed, improved, if the distress of this country would tend to produce a better government. I leave him in possession of that moderate, wise, and humane sentiment. I am confident that it is the first wish, as it is the most indispensable duty of his Majesty's ministers, to use every means in their power

\* Mr. Sheridan.

for reducing the high price of grain, and for rendering the situation of the poor more comfortable. Under this impression I shall conclude with recommending to the house to take the subject under their serious and immediate consideration, in order to get an accurate knowledge of the state of the country, and see if any measures can possibly be adopted to relieve the heavy pressure under which his Majesty's subjects at present labour, and to prevent the renewal of similar embarrassments in future.

The address was carried after a division,

Ayes ..... 240

Noes ..... 59

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*November 10, 1795.*

THE House having proceeded to the order of the day for taking into consideration his Majesty's late proclamation against seditious meetings,

MR. PITT rose and said,

That the circumstances, upon which he meant to ground the proceedings of that night had made so deep an impression on the mind of every gentleman in that house, as well as on that of every man in the country, that it would not be necessary for him to make any comments on them. The public had seen with becoming indignation, that a virtuous and beloved sovereign had been attacked in the most criminal and outrageous manner, and at a time too when he was in the exercise of the greatest and most important function of kingly capacity, when he was going to assemble the great council of the nation; that great, and indeed only resource against every national evil. The first impulses of every man's mind, after an attack so immediately directed against the life of the king of these realms, must be those of horror and detestation of the wicked,



the diabolical wretches, who in contempt of the respect and reverence due to the sacred character of their sovereign—in contempt of the whole legislature, by a kind of concentrated malice, directed a blow at once at its three branches, in attempting to assassinate a mild and benignant monarch, who was the great cement and center of our glorious constitution. In contemplating this calamity, the house would feel that some correction must be given to the laws, at present in force against such crimes; means must be found to repress the spirit which gave birth to so daring an outrage, and to prevent such unprecedented consequences of sedition, and of sedition too leading to assassination by the most despicable, as well as the most dangerous of all modes of attack, against the vital principles of the state, in the person of the sovereign.

If, under this first impression, every man should think himself called upon, (as he was sure would be the case) by the loyalty and allegiance he owed to the sovereign office, and by affection to the person of the sovereign, by the reverence due to religion, by self-preservation itself, and the happiness of society at large, to apply a remedy to those very alarming symptoms, another impression would arise out of it, equally forcible, and equally obvious, namely, that they would do this business but by halves, and act carelessly and ineffectually, if they directed their attention only to that separate act, and not to those very mischievous and formidable circumstances, which were connected with it, in point of principles, and which produced it, in point of fact.

In endeavouring to lead the attention of the house to the remedies, which appeared to him most likely to be efficient to this purpose, he would not advert to legal distinctions, but to prudential principles. If the house viewed the separate act with that eye of horror he conceived they must, and if, viewing it so, they felt the conviction, that a repetition of such enormities should be prevented immediately; the next point, that would impress itself upon their minds, as arising from the two former, was, that they should adopt some means to

prevent these seditious assemblies, which served as vehicles to faction and disloyalty, which fanned and kept alive the flame of disaffection, and filled the minds of the people with discontent. He had the most indubitable proof to support him in saying, that this sentiment pervaded not only that house, but all the kingdom; and that in no one instance which had ever occurred, were the commons called upon more loudly by the wishes and prayers of an anxious community, than they were at this time by the whole people of England, to avert the ruin with which those assemblies menaced the country, by preventing their further proceedings. In full hopes that the house felt the force of these impressions as forcibly as he did, and would agree to some such measure as he had alluded to, his motion of that day would go to that object. It might, perhaps, occur to gentlemen, that a law should be previously made for the protection of his Majesty's person; but he informed them, that the other house had now under its consideration a bill to that effect, which he hoped would soon be laid before them for their concurrence. His motion, therefore, was not directed to alter or enforce the laws of the king's safety, but to prevent those meetings, to which all the mischiefs he had mentioned were attributable.

The meetings to which he alluded were, he said, of two descriptions; under the first of those descriptions, fell those meetings, which, under a pretext (to which they by no means adhered) of petitioning parliament for rights, of which they affected to be deprived, agitated questions, and promulgated opinions and insinuations, hostile to the existing government, and tending to bring it into disrepute with the people. The other description, though less numerous, not less public, nor less dangerous, were concerted evidently for the purpose of disseminating unjust grounds of jealousy, discontent, and false complaints against the constitution, of irritating the minds of the people against their lawful governors, and of encouraging them to acts of even treason itself. In these meetings, every thing that could create faction, every thing that could excite dis-

loyalty, every thing that could prepare the minds of those who attended, for rebellion, was industriously circulated. Both these required some strong law to prevent them ; for, if the arm of the executive government was not strengthened by such a law, they would be continued, if not to the utter ruin, certainly to the indelible disgrace, of the country.

As to the first of those descriptions, no one would venture to deny the right of the people to express their opinions on political men and measures, and to discuss and assert their right of petitioning all the branches of the legislature ; nor was there any man who would be farther from encroaching on that right than himself. It was undoubtedly a most valuable privilege, of which nothing should deprive them. But on the other hand, if meetings of this kind were made the mere cover or the pretext for acts which were as inconsistent with the liberty of the subject, as it was possible to imagine any thing to be ; if, instead of stating grievances, the people were excited to rebellion ; if, instead of favouring the principles of freedom, the very foundation of it was to be destroyed, and with it the happiness of the people, it was high time for the legislature to interpose with its authority.

This consideration, he confessed, occasioned considerable difficulty, but it did not create an insuperable dilemma. In applying the desired remedy, two things were to be looked to — the first, to correct the abuse of a sacred and invaluable privilege ; the second, to preserve that privilege inviolate : caution, was therefore necessary, lest, on the one hand, they should encroach on the rights of the people, or, on the other, should suffer the abuse of those rights to become the instrument of their total extinction. This was a matter of great delicacy, and should be attended to in the detail ; but the house would see, that at present the real question was, Did not the pressure of the moment call for *some* remedy ?

According to opinions which he had collected, as well as he had been able, from others, and such as he had formed for himself, the great point wanted at this moment, was a more



clear and defined power in the magistrate, to disperse and put an end to all meetings likely to be productive of consequences such as were already mentioned. He by no means meant this power of dispersion to extend to meetings professedly and obviously lawful, and held for legal and constitutional purposes; but that, in every case of a numerous meeting, of whatever nature, or under whatever colour, notice should be given, so as to enable the magistrate to keep a watchful eye over their proceedings. He should therefore propose, that whatever be the pretext of a public meeting (if the house was at all of opinion there was any necessity for a regulation of such meetings), such notice should be given to the magistrate, in order that he might attend, for the preservation of the public peace; that he might watch the proceedings, to prevent any measure that might tend to attack, or to bring into contempt either the sovereign himself, or any branch of the established government of the country. That the magistrate should be empowered to apprehend any persons whose conduct should seem calculated for those purposes, and that any resistance to the authority of a magistrate so acting, should be deemed felony in every person concerned in it. That, on perceiving the proceedings of such meeting to be tumultuous and leading to the bad consequences he had already mentioned, the magistrate should have power similar to that which he had already by the riot act, to disperse that assembly; and that, after reading the riot act, and ordering them to disperse, any number of persons remaining should, as by the riot act, incur the penalty of the law, that of felony. The house would see, that this summary power in the magistrate, while it would still leave to the people the fair right to petition, on the one hand, would, on the other, prevent the abuse of it. This, he said, was the outline. All detail he would reserve for future discussion.

Under the other description of meetings, through which the minds of the people were poisoned, fell those of public lecturers, who made the dissemination of sedition the source of livelihood. To them he thought it would be proper to apply regu-

lations something like those that passed about fourteen years ago, in an act, which, from the learned gentleman who brought it in, was called *Mansfield's act*, and by which all houses wherein meetings of an improper kind were held on a Sunday, were to be treated as *disorderly houses*. And, to avoid evasion, the clause should apply to every house wherein any people met, exceeding by a certain number to be stated in the act, the real family of the house. These, said he, are the outlines of the measure I have to propose; and so convinced am I that there can be but one feeling, and one opinion, that some measure of this kind is necessary; [here a cry of "hear!" from the opposite side] and so little am I shaken in that conviction by the adverse vociferations of "hear! hear!" that I am sure I should but shew a distrust of the cause, if I said any more. I will therefore only move,

"That leave be given to bring in a bill for the more effectually preventing of seditious meetings and assemblies."

After a debate of much warmth, in which the measure was loudly reprobated by Mr. Fox, Mr. Sheridan, and Mr. Grey, the House divided on the motion for leave to bring in the bill,

Ayes ..... 214

Noes ..... 42

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November 17, 1795.

ON the question for the second reading of the bill for more effectually preventing seditious meetings and assemblies,

MR. PITT said, that as he had repeatedly delivered his sentiments upon the bill, he felt but little inclined unnecessarily to take up the attention of the house, particularly as most part of what had been already said that day had little connection with the question. Under this description he did not include the comparison which the right honourable gentleman\* had thought

\* Mr. Fox.

proper to draw between a revolution in this country in favour of the house of Stuart, and a revolution in favour of that kind of government which French principles would recommend and inculcate. No man could be more sensible than he was of the dreadful calamities that the nation would sustain by the re-establishment of a Popish pretender, who would, no doubt, endeavour to subvert our liberties, our religion, and our laws, and possibly he might succeed in his object. He had no hesitation, however, in declaring, that were he to choose between two such horrible alternatives, he would cheerfully prefer the restoration of the pretender to that cruel and desolating system of anarchy, which would radically destroy all those principles by which social order was maintained. He scrupled not to agree with the right honourable gentleman in declaring, that were we under the same circumstances that pressed on our ancestors, we should be equally ready to make the same sacrifices that they had done in so necessary a resistance; and he further admitted, that when we expressed ourselves equally willing to risk our lives in an opposition to either jacobitical or jacobinical principles, we had no more to offer, nor were we any longer to seek for any practical difference. It happened conveniently for his purpose, that the arguments and illustrations employed by the right honourable gentleman, furnished him with materials which would serve for an answer to most of his arguments, as far as he had urged any thing closely connected with the subject. Of this comparison between the two kinds of revolutions alluded to in particular, without attempting to reason on which side the choice ought to preponderate, it was sufficient to say, that we were ready with our lives to resist the introduction of either.

Here then, Mr. Pitt said, he wished to pause, and beseech the right honourable gentleman to adopt the sage counsels of his ancestors, with the same ardour which he expressed when he declared his desire to imitate the valour of their arms. Our ancestors expelled the family of the Stuarts, and established the glorious and immortal revolution, in the first instance by the sword; but their bravery might have been ineffectual, if they had not secured



their object by legislative provisions. It was in this manner, more than by personal valour, that they preserved the constitution. What was the bill of rights itself, but a measure adopted by our ancestors in consequence of their finding themselves under new circumstances? They declared it to be high treason to dispute the queen's authority, to deny that the parliament was competent to confine and limit the succession, and, finally, to render attempts to introduce a system, different from that which they had established by the laws, feloniously penal. Upon examining the present bill it would be found, that their example was rigidly adhered to, and preventive measures resorted to on motives of policy and prudence, in order to guard against that extreme which would make it necessary for many to risk their lives in a contest, and be involved in all the miseries that attend a civil war. One great recommendation of this temporary measure was, that it strictly adhered to the examples of former times; and while it added to the general security, made no innovation on the constitution, nor, in the smallest degree, weakened the spirit of the laws. Our ancestors, in times of danger, and even during that interval which took place between the deposition and restoration of the monarchy, adhered, as much as so peculiar a situation would admit, to ancient forms, and conducted the public business by means of both houses of parliament, if that assembly could properly be called a parliament, when it was actually deprived of one of its component parts.

Were there no precedents, no land-marks, to guide their proceedings on the present emergency? In days of difficulty and danger, which had threatened one branch of the legislature, and when doubts had arisen respecting the competency of parliament to legislate in one particular case,—limiting the succession of the crown, our ancestors made a law suitable to the occasion. But at this time what was the enemy that we had to contend with, and what the danger to be repelled? Not an attack upon one branch of the legislature, not a doubt about the right to legislate in a particular case; the right to legislate at all was questioned, and the legality of monarchy itself in any shape was

denied. Was that, he begged to ask, a proper time to sit still, and refrain from taking vigorous and effectual measures, merely because they might deviate in some degree from established practice? The parallel that had been attempted to be drawn between the measures of the executive government at this time, and those of the house of Stuart, in no degree applied. In the days of the Charles', the people were above all taught to look up to parliament for safety and protection: they might undoubtedly look elsewhere for assistance, but parliament was the center in which all their hopes and dependence rested, and in which alone they were led to expect redress for their grievances: such had been the example of their ancestors at the revolution, and as it was before their eyes, it ought to regulate their proceedings.

The right honourable gentleman had talked of risking his life in defence of the constitution: he was not asked now to risk his life, he was asked only to apply the laws to the present state of the country, in such a manner as to render the risking of lives, for the present at least, unnecessary; and he was asked to do this in time, before the evil which threatened us should have risen to such a height, as to bring on personal dangers. Gentlemen had made much objection to this bill, as debarring the subject of the right to petition, as secured to them by the bill of rights. But did the bill of rights imply, that any other than parliament was to be the channel through which evils in the government or constitution were to be redressed? The revolution itself tended also to prove the point he was contending for; since it was a memorable example, that even when the throne was vacant, and when the forms of the constitution necessarily failed, yet even then so strong was the impression on the minds of men, of the maxims which they had before learnt, that no new constitution was formed in consequence, but the old constitution was still considered as subsisting. The two remaining houses of parliament, and those two houses alone, were then resorted to, and not the sovereignty of the people, as the means through which the other branch of the legislature was to be supplied. It was not to that sovereignty of the people which is



now talked of, that recourse was had. Thus, therefore, the revolution itself conspired to shew that it was to parliament, or to the people in parliament, and not to the people out of parliament, that the right of framing alterations in the constitution always devolved.

The next point to be considered had been insisted upon much in the house, and, as he understood, made very industrious use of out of it, viz. that the present bill was calculated to create a difference, and cause a separation between the lower and the higher orders of the people. The effect of this bill, he was ready to maintain, would be diametrically the reverse. The system of dividing the orders of the community was that which formed the grand spring and power of jacobinism, which the present bill was evidently calculated to oppose, to check, and to suppress. It was by exciting the envy and hatred of the poor against those in higher stations, by holding out to them the hope of exchanging their conditions, and by representing property as the easy prey of the indigent, the idle, and the licentious, that the profligate principles of jacobinism had succeeded in destroying all social order in France, and the same end had been aimed at by the same means, in all other parts of Europe.

Under our happy constitution, he believed there was no man of rank or property, at this time, so negligent of his duty, and so unacquainted with his interest, as to draw a line of separation between himself and those that were below him, in rank, affluence, or degree. What nation in the world now existed, or had been known to exist, in which the great and the low were placed at so little a distance, and so slightly separated? A continued and well-cemented connection, which could not easily be dissolved, was so visible, that it was impossible to fix upon any link in the general chain where the union of the parts did not immediately appear. The middle class derived supply, vigour, and support, from that below it; diffused it through all around; communicated and received reciprocal aid from that which was above it; and an animating spring gave that activity and general



circulation of benefits to the whole, which composed the order of well-regulated society.

The manner by which the right honourable gentleman had attempted to prove that the tendency of this bill was to make such invidious distinctions, was most extraordinary. The bill had been held out, as a bill which proscribed all meetings whatsoever from petitioning parliament, except such as were licensed. So far from this, the bill left all established meetings precisely as they were before. The requiring of a license had been stated, as, in all cases, an intolerable evil; it was, nevertheless, singular enough, that *not* to require a license was now considered by the right honourable gentleman as a still worse evil, on account of the partiality of the principle. He would ask, what was the partiality? Was it that all other meetings but those that were licensed were to be abolished? No such thing; they were merely to be put under some new restrictions, which should make them more resemble the regular meetings, which were not to be subjected to a license.

But to come to the main question:—it was distinctly this. First, does the bill so abridge and limit the right of petitioning parliament, as to leave it insufficient for the purpose of affording due constitutional security? Secondly, does the bill impose any ineffectual, superfluous, and unnecessary restraints? In order to judge upon these questions, he would consider what were the limitations imposed by the bill on this right of petitioning. A previous notice of the intended meetings was, in certain cases, to be required. The meetings of corporate bodies were not required to give any notice whatever; meetings called by a certain number of justices; meetings called by the lords lieutenants of counties, or by sheriffs, were all excepted from the obligation. It had been said, however, that these last were servants of the crown, and because servants, therefore in the interest of the crown. But how did this observation apply? A sheriff of a county was under no influence either of dependence, or expectation, or gratitude. The office of sheriff was considered as an

onerous and expensive office, which few persons liked, and from which many wished to be excused. Was it fair then to describe a meeting called by a sheriff, as a meeting called by one who was a mere tool of the crown? But, besides, what was the fact?—The fact was, that meetings were, according to the present custom, called by these very sheriffs, and a great proportion of the complaints of the country actually found their way to parliament through this channel;—a way which was still left open. This, he said, was the best proof that meetings of this sort were not unavailing. He believed it had commonly happened, that much the greater proportion of petitions to parliament came through the sheriffs, and those of another kind were usually thought more suspicious. How unfair then was it to call the bill, as it had been called, “an extinction of the right to petition,” when, in fact, that channel through which petitions usually come, was still left open! He declared he was as ready as any man to admit broadly, that *supposed or real grievances might, as matter of right, be presented to parliament by all ranks of people*. He must, however, at the same time remark, that he did not consider those to be the best friends of the constitution, or of the lower ranks of the people, who were always goading them to bring forward petitions, and encouraging the agitation and discussion of public affairs; among those too, who, of all men, from their education, their habits of life, and their means of information, were indisputably the least capable of exercising sound judgment on such topics. The right of petitioning then remained as formerly, excepting in certain cases, to which he had alluded.

With regard to the observations made by the right honourable gentleman in his interference for procuring a more equal representation of the people in parliament, Mr. Pitt said, he would do him the justice to say that he never had encouraged the wild, visionary, and mischievous plan of universal suffrage and annual parliaments. He had felt, what every man of sense and observation must feel, that the house of commons, composed as it was, was the virtual representation of the people of England: the sole matter in doubt was, whether the members had such an

identity of interest with those who had no voice in election of representatives, as would secure to the latter the consideration, to which, as Englishmen, they ought to be entitled? In the meetings held upon that subject formerly, though some of them had not been regularly convened by the sheriffs, he well remembered that their proceedings were looked to with more jealousy than the proceedings of those meetings which were assembled in a regular manner.

So little had been urged in opposition to the provisions of the bill, that it was unnecessary for him to argue much in their defence. The notice to be given of meetings held avowedly for the discussion of public measures, had been so modified as to retain little of that formidable appearance which gentlemen at first represented it to bear; indeed, the honourable gentleman himself had confessed, it was that part of the bill to which he saw the least objection. So necessary did public advertisements, in order to convene large bodies of men on political questions, strike him to be, that the clause would seem a superfluous precaution, if it were not for the peculiar construction of the corresponding societies, which, by their divisions and subdivisions, had not only the means of secret communication, but also of prompt execution of their designs, however alarming, however dangerous.

It had been much insisted on, that a main objection to the bill was, that these meetings were hereafter to be held under the inspection of magistrates. The force of this objection would surely be done away, when it was considered that this provision only set all other meetings on the same footing with those which had always been authorised in their corporate capacities; for in regular meetings the sheriff was necessarily and of course always present. The next point complained of had been the mode of dispersing meetings. Was it possible for the house not to have felt the danger of some late meetings, and did they not feel the necessity of checking them? If they did not, he would only say, that this was not the time to trifle: if they did not seize the opportunity of applying a preventive, they might



soon lose the power of exercising their own functions in that house. For this reason it was highly necessary to grant new discretionary power to magistrates—a degree of additional power, guarded by the degree of additional responsibility attached to them. He owned he felt some astonishment at one argument coming from a quarter from which he least expected it, a declaration that struck at the very foundation of the administration of public justice in this country. A learned gentleman, \* of the first professional talents, reputation, and practice, had urged as an argument against the bill, and put it in a general and unqualified manner, that the magistracy of the country were necessarily corrupt; an invective against a body of persons to whose exertions, in their situation, the country owed the most signal services. With equal surprise he had heard the same learned and honourable gentleman who, while he arraigned the discretion granted to the magistrates under this bill; acknowledged at the same time, that they were already authorised to exercise the same powers under the existing laws, namely, the Riot Act, and a statute of Henry IV. which had been alluded to by the judge (the late Lord Mansfield) on the trial of Lord George Gordon. Without insisting, for the present, on the illiberality of the suggestion, its inconsistency was glaring, and it might be proper to consider, in another point of view, how a meeting convened by a sheriff could be esteemed a meeting held only by permission of his Majesty's ministers. That sheriffs were appointed by his Majesty, from lists made out by the judges of assize, of the persons most capable of serving that office, was certainly true. Although the office of sheriff was an office of dignity and honour, were he to ask, whether his Majesty, in conferring it, bestowed a favour which called for any great gratitude on the part of the receiver, he believed that in most instances he should be answered in the negative. Added to this, when the appointment was once conferred, the king had no power to remove the per-

\* Mr, Erskine.

son appointed sheriff; and upon the whole, there was scarcely any office which was attended with a greater degree of independence. Other magistrates, who exercised offices for which, as all our law writers declared the nation was indebted to them, and who, in the service of their country, every day exposed themselves to insults and dangers, he could not but lament that any professional gentleman should be found to speak of them with such undeserved indignity. It well merited the close examination of gentlemen, to what extent, and to what extent only, the powers of magistrates under the present bill went to prevent meetings, if their designs seemed calculated to obtain redress through any other medium than the legislature, and to disperse them, if the magistrates were of opinion, that the proceedings held, or the speeches delivered at any meeting had an illegal tendency. In fine, the sole object of the bill was, that the people should look to parliament, and to parliament alone, for the redress of such grievances as they might have to complain of, with a confident reliance of relief being afforded them, if their complaints should be well founded and practically remediable. That it should be understood that the condition of no man was so abject, but he could find a legal means of bringing his grievances before his representatives in parliament, and subject them to their consideration; but that he would not leave a door open, through which a torrent might rush in, and overwhelm the constitution. It behoved them to take care that menaces were not conveyed to parliament under the pretext of petitions, and that they were not made the vehicles of indirect libels, fabricated at meetings convened under the pretence of very different objects, by men whose real purpose it was to undermine and subvert the constitution.

Mr. Pitt concluded by saying, that, upon the whole, a just comparison ought to be made between the evils that might follow from this bill, and the dangers that might arise, were the house to reject it. The balance being struck on this alternative, the next question was, whether it was not necessary that the people should know it was to parliament alone that they must

look for any alteration of the law, and that, when their grievances were known and stated, they would not look to parliament in vain for redress. The house and the public were equally interested in this bill, and so was every class of the people, as fair and constitutional petitioners; it therefore only remained for gentlemen to decide whether they did their duty best for the interests of their constituents or not, by entertaining or rejecting a bill founded on such principles.

The question was carried ;

For the second reading of the bill ..... 213

Against it ..... 43

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*November 23, 1795.*

MR. PITT having moved, that the order of the day, for going into a committee on the bill for the better security of his Majesty's person and government against treasonable and seditious practices, should be postponed till Wednesday,

Mr. Fox took this occasion to express in very forcible language his reprobation of the bills then passing through parliament, [the bill for more effectually preventing seditious meetings was at this time in its progress through the House] asserting that he conceived them to be a repeal of the bill of rights, and as tending to the subversion of the constitution. "If," said he, "I am asked how they are to be resisted, in the present instance, I will say by peaceable means, by petition, by remonstrance; but if they have once passed into law, and I am then asked how they are to be resisted, I will then answer that it is no longer a question of morality and duty, but of prudence. I affirm, that no attack which the unfortunate family of Stuart made upon the liberties of the country was more alarming and atrocious than that which is intended by the present bills. I know that by this declaration of sentiment, I shall subject myself to misconstructions, but I am prepared to brave them in the discharge of my duty. I again repeat, that if the people of England submit to these bills, I may still retain my partiality for my countrymen: I shall wish them all happiness, consistent with such an abject state of mind—but I can no longer be a profitable servant to the public." Mr. Fox concluded by moving, that the committee on the bills should be postponed till that day se'nnight.



MR. PITT :—I do not rise, Sir, to argue the tendency of these bills. I do not rise to speak to the question of delay ; that has already been fully discussed. Nor do I rise to follow the right honourable gentleman \* through the whole of his speech. But there are some passages in it which, consistently with my duty as a member of parliament, with my feelings as a man, with my attachment to my sovereign, and my veneration for the constitution, I cannot hear, without instantly expressing my horror and indignation at them. The right honourable gentleman has made a bold, broad, and unqualified declaration, that if his arguments and his measures do not prevent the passing of the bills, which a great majority of this house conceive to be necessary for the security of the person of the sovereign, and the preservation of the rights of the people, he will then have recourse to different means of opposition. He has avowed his intention of setting up his own arguments in opposition to the authority of the legislature. He has said, that if he is asked his advice, he will put the propriety of resistance only on the question of prudence ;—without adverting whether the consequences of this advice may be followed by the penalties of treason, and the danger of convulsion, thus openly advising an appeal to the sword, which must either consign its authors to the vengeance of the violated law, or involve the country in anarchy and bloodshed. The right honourable gentleman has taken care not to be mistated : happily for the country, this declaration of his principles is too clear to admit of a doubt. With all the horror that I feel at such language, I am glad however the right honourable gentleman has been so unreserved and explicit. The house and the country will judge of that gentleman's conduct from his own language ; they will see the extent of his veneration for the constitution, and of his respect for parliament, when, in violation of his duty, in defiance of legal punishment, he can bring himself to utter such sentiments. I am glad the right honourable gentleman has made that avowal, because I hope that it will warn all the true friends of the constitution to rally round it for its defence.

\* Mr. Fox.

I will not enter into a discussion of the abstract right of resistance, or what degree of oppression on the part of the government, would set the people free from their allegiance. I will only call to the recollection of those who hear me, that the principle of these bills, upon which the right honourable gentleman has ventured such language, has met with the approbation of a large majority of the house, and I trust that majority have not forgot what is due to themselves and their country. I hope they will shew the right honourable gentleman, that they have not lost the spirit of their ancestors, which has been so frequently referred to; and that if they are driven by treason to the hard necessity of defending the constitution by force, that they will act with that irresistible energy which such a crime must necessarily excite in a loyal assembly. The power of the law of England, I trust, will be sufficient to defeat the machinations of all who risk such dangerous doctrines, and to punish treason wherever it may be found. Let me tell the right honourable gentleman, therefore, that if our sense of public duty induces us to have recourse to those measures, we will not suffer ourselves to be intimidated by his menaces. If we feel it incumbent upon us to enact laws suited to the emergency of the times, we shall not be wanting to ourselves in the energy which may be required to enforce those laws; and whatever attempts may be made to resist their operation, we trust, that the power of the laws themselves will be found amply sufficient to defeat such attempts.

Mr. Fox rose to explain:—"I rise to re-state my expression, but not to retract one word of what I have said. Let the words be taken down at the table.—They express the sentiments of an honest Englishman; they are those sentiments for which our forefathers shed their blood, and upon which the revolution was founded: but let me not be mistaken. The case I put was, that these bills might be passed by a corrupt majority of parliament, contrary to the opinion and sentiments of the great body of the nation. If the majority of the people approve of these bills, I will not be the person to inflame their minds, and stir them up to rebellion; but if, in the general opinion of the country, it is conceived, that these bills attack the fundamental principles of our constitution, I then maintain, that the propriety of resistance, instead of remaining any longer a question of morality, will

become merely a question of prudence. I may be told that these are strong words; but strong measures require strong words. I will not submit to arbitrary power, while there remains any alternative to vindicate my freedom."

The House negatived Mr. Fox's amendment without a division.

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*December 9, 1795.*

THE order of the day being read for taking into consideration his Majesty's message, which had been delivered the preceding day, acquainting the House "that the crisis, which was depending at the commencement of the session, had led to such an order of things in France, as would induce his Majesty to meet any disposition to negotiation on the part of the enemy with an earnest desire to give it the fullest and speediest effect, and to conclude a treaty of general peace, whenever it could be effected on just and suitable terms for himself and his allies,"

MR. PITT in a short introductory speech moved an address, "thanking his Majesty for his gracious communication and expressing the satisfaction of the House at the sentiments contained therein; at the same time assuring him of their cordial support in enabling his Majesty to continue the contest with the utmost energy and vigour, till the period should arrive for concluding a peace on just and honourable terms."

The address was opposed by Mr. Sheridan and Mr. Grey, the former of whom moved an amendment, "signifying the concern of the House, that any form of government in France should induce his Majesty to be averse to peace; and requesting that, setting aside all considerations of that nature, he would direct that an immediate negotiation might be entered on for the above salutary object."

MR. PITT then rose to reply:

HE said, he prefaced the address which he had the honour of proposing with very few words, because he conceived there could have been no difference of opinion upon the subject. He formed this opinion, both from adverting to the nature of his Majesty's gracious communication, from the situation of the contending parties, and from the existing circumstances of the war. What was most calculated to confirm that opinion



was the conduct of the honourable gentleman himself\* who had just sat down, and who the preceding day, when he had introduced the present subject, after mature consideration, said he would not press the motion of which he had given notice. He declared he was at a loss to understand what was at this time the honourable gentleman's object; it would seem that, had he followed his own inclination, there would and ought to have been no amendment, and yet he votes for that proposed. At the same time, too, he seems inclined to put the same construction on the meaning of the message and address that was intended to be conveyed by the amendment. It was really singular to observe the mode in which the question had been taken up; to attend to the arguments which had generally been used by gentlemen on the other side, and the conduct which they practically pursued.

The address went to pledge the house to co-operate with his Majesty on such measures as might tend to the obtainment of peace on honourable terms, and stated that the house was satisfied, that if a disposition to that effect was manifested on the part of the enemy, his Majesty was inclined to meet it, by which the house would entertain a hope that peace might be concluded on honourable terms, and that, whether we should succeed in the object by his Majesty's readiness to meet that disposition to negotiate, must depend altogether upon the terms. What said the amendment moved by the honourable gentleman? It went a great deal further. It went to require his Majesty's ministers immediately to enter on that negotiation, whether they should see that disposition manifested or not; or rather, whether they should see that disposition affirmed or negatived by the enemy in the course of their conduct. Such was the nature of the amendment which had been supported by honourable gentlemen, who upon various occasions, with so much zeal, eloquence, and address, urged every topic to prove that ministers were responsible to the public for not having opened a negotiation long ago, and that they should not wait until they saw

\* Mr. Grey.

the disposition to negotiate in the enemy; and now that ministers were coming forward, with a declared readiness on the part of his Majesty to meet that disposition, they charged them with having abandoned their former arguments upon this subject, to throw obstacles in the way of negotiation. This was the way in which they proved to the house, and to the public, their earnestness for a negotiation for peace. The theme of their eloquence formerly was, that peace was at all events desirable, so desirable that they cared not by whom it was obtained. The theme of their eloquence at present was, that ministers had abandoned all their former arguments, and the whole of their consistency, by professing a readiness to meet the desire of the enemy, if any such desire should appear, to negotiate for peace upon just and honourable terms. The purity of such opposition was not a subject for him to discuss. Gentlemen seemed to triumph under the idea that they had discovered inconsistency in the conduct of his Majesty's ministers; and they seemed to triumph as if this inconsistency had been proved: they seemed indeed to triumph at the idea that they could impress upon the house topics which might restrain the object of negotiation. They seemed to rejoice that they had found means to impede that peace which, on so many occasions, in the animation of their eloquence, and the candour of their nature, they declared to be the object which was nearest to their hearts. They seemed to triumph that, although the enemy might manifest a disposition to negotiate for a peace, yet by the present minister a peace could not be concluded. Whether such a triumph was founded upon public virtue and patriotic principle, or was a triumph of a less dignified nature, he should leave to others to determine, or, if they pleased, he would leave it to these gentlemen to determine for themselves.

What were the circumstances which had been strenuously insisted upon by the supporters of the amendment, and particularly by the honourable gentleman who spoke last, in favour of that amendment? He declared he had not heard one word to that effect by way of argument; as little had he heard against



the address which he had the honour to move. He meant he had not heard any thing from these gentlemen against their agreeing to the address; for the drift of their arguments went against himself and the majority of the house, with whom he agreed in the whole course of the war, agreeing to the address. They endeavoured to prove that this address was perfectly consistent with their arguments upon all former occasions, when the subject of the war was debated, but perfectly inconsistent with the conduct of the majority of the house. This argument, thus singular in its nature, was founded upon neither more nor less than a total forgetfulness of every leading fact and every leading argument that had been brought forward since the commencement of this war, up to the moment in which he was speaking. These gentlemen applied all their objections, not to the conduct of the enemy, but to the conduct of the executive government of this country. They, in the first place, bring forward an observation which has again and again been confuted, that the war originated in the aggression of this country. They, in the second place, wish to fix ministers with having stated it to be an absolute *sine quâ non* to establish a certain form of government in France, and that too in the ancient form, that everlasting warfare was declared against every other system, and that unless that object was obtained, it was to be a *bellum internecinum*. Thirdly, that between the state of the present government of France and those that preceded it since the revolution, there was no practical distinction so as to give us any security for peace until the ancient form be established. Fourthly, that the present form of government in France, in establishing a council of ancients, &c. was a trifling formal distinction. And lastly, that we had met, in the whole course of the war, nothing but defeats, disasters, and disgraces, with the exception of a few victories at sea. On each of these heads it would be necessary, before he sat down, to make some remarks.

Upon the first point, he would not tread over the ground that had been already so fully occupied, nor imagine that it was in



the power of any honourable gentleman present to reason over the majority of the house to the persuasion, that the war was not, in the most emphatical sense of the word, defensive on the part of this country, and, at the same time, the most important, in a general point of view, that ever was undertaken, involving the interests and well-being of Europe, nay, of all mankind. When that war was once commenced, it certainly became a most material question, when they could again look for peace? The answer could not but be, not until we have repelled unjust aggression, and procured reasonable hopes of future security. On the first day of the present session he had stated to the house some reason for being satisfied with our efforts. He stated that he considered our efforts as an example to future times, as well as a satisfaction to our own feelings; as a source of comfort to every lover of justice, of good order, and of every thing that was respectable in society, that the efforts of a great and a free people had done so much to stem the torrent with which all the civilized world was threatened to be overwhelmed. He stated further, that he should have been happy if the war had ended in a total dissolution of that system which had been adopted by our enemies. He stated also, that even dangerous as these principles were, the war might be terminated even under the present form of the government of France; and he observed that the evils with which civil society had been threatened by the principle on which this war had been carried on by our enemies, had been in a great degree defeated. When he was asked, why we expended so much of our blood and treasure in the prosecution of this war? he would answer, it was because our enemies gave us no alternative but to hazard them. When he was asked, what we had gained by the war? he would answer, all that we must have lost without it. What did the supporters of the amendment desire the house to do? They asked parliament to take away all discretion from the executive power, and give a bond to the enemy that all further efforts should be discontinued against them. These gentlemen were not content that the necessary inference of the prin-

principles of the enemy should follow in their course, but they must take away the very means of making the negotiation an advantageous one to the country, as if the mischief of these principles could not otherwise be sufficiently certain; and yet these gentlemen, at the opening of the session, declaimed violently on the necessity of entering into a negotiation. They might bring forward, day after day, their different motions upon that subject, one after another, to record their principles that the war was unjust, asking always in their turn, what we had got by the war. This, he believed, the house would think was not a very candid or just mode of proceeding.

He would next call upon the house to mark the candour of the second part, to which he had adverted, of the argument of these gentlemen. He had said that the aggression of the enemy on us was violent, and unlike all former, even unjust wars, in which allies had been attacked or territories seized, or in which any of the usual causes of just war had appeared; but that the war on the part of the enemy was intimately connected with principles which professed an intention to subvert all the established governments upon earth, which the efforts of the professors of these principles could reach. He said this principle would allow no rest to any established government upon earth while it had any force to resist with. He said so, and he felt it to be the cause of the present war, and that we had no resource but that of repelling with vigour the attack that was made upon us. He said also there were many in that unhappy country anxious for the destruction of that principle, and willing to co-operate with us for that destruction. He said it was the just exercise of the right of war to interfere in the internal concerns of an enemy, to endeavour to overthrow that government for the purpose of bringing the war to a conclusion. No man ever attempted to refute this principle upon the authority of the law of nations, or upon the principles of justice. He said he wished for peace on honourable grounds, and as favourable to us as possible. This was all the interference that he ever intended



with respect to the government of France. Instead of taking this on a fair ground, it was maintained by gentlemen on the other side that he wished at all events to overthrow the whole government of France, and to substitute the old in its place; and even that day was quoted the phrase of *bellum internecinum* as applicable to the present war, a phrase which he believed was never pronounced by any gentleman on that side of the house but to repel a misrepresentation from the other side. He would say positively for himself, he never used it for any other purpose, and he believed it was never so used by any other. When he stated that the government of France was bad in principle, he then said that even under that government there were circumstances that might compel us to treat for peace. He did not deny that he had admitted, nay contended, that monarchy was desirable for that country, and for the general interest of mankind; but the idea that he had at any time made the restoration of monarchy a *sine quâ non*, was so entirely beyond all he had ever uttered upon the subject, that he should not argue it.

He was come to another point which had been a good deal insisted upon; viz. that if the executive government should make peace, they were chargeable with a dereliction of their principle. How stood that point? He said on former occasions, that we could not make peace until there was a reasonable expectation of security for its continuance, and that; if such a security could be reasonably expected, then the question must depend upon the terms. No, the question was, did the enemy stand in such a situation as to make that expectation of security reasonable, and will they shew a disposition to negotiate? It was on these points our conduct should be regulated.

In considering that part of the subject, the next question was, is there not a substantial difference between the former order of things in France, and the present order? Upon this subject gentlemen had argued as if the former mode of government was as good for our security in negotiating as the present.



That question, like every other, must depend upon all the circumstances which might attend it. Gentlemen on the other side had argued, if the terms were right, the former government was such as we might have treated with safely. He had said, he did not think so, and of the former government he would say the same still. But when he said, we should treat now because the present government might be safe, these gentlemen turned round upon him, and contended, "This is not the time in which we shall be safe in treating according to the minister's own principles. He is inconsistent with himself, he abandons his own ground." These gentlemen, in their anxiety for his consistency, lost sight of the interest of their country, which was committed to their charge. Whether there was a great difference between the situation of France at the present or at former times, when he had denied the policy of attempting to negotiate, was a question into the detail of which he should not at present enter; he would refer to what he had said on that point on the first day of the present session. He had said then that from the change which had taken place in the form of their government, from the change which had taken place with regard to its mode of calling forth its supplies, and, above all, with regard to the change which had visibly taken place in the disposition and temper of the people of that country, there was a reasonable hope that a peace might be concluded with them at this time; and this hope had not existed at any former period of the war. There were points in this argument which he knew gentlemen on the other side would be disposed to contest; but be the degree what it might, there certainly was a difference in the situation of France at this moment from any other period since the commencement of the war. Gentlemen should not mistake him—he was not going to pronounce a panegyric on the present form of the government of that country. He only said it was different from its former state.

The gentlemen on the other side had talked of an attack on the principles of that country by some, and the defence of them by others that night. Was it a mere slip of inadvertency, or did

they mean it should be understood that he was to invert the proposition, and say that he attacked the principles of the French, and that these honourable gentlemen were the defenders of them? He would leave that to the cooler reflection of these honourable gentlemen. Whether they defended the constitution of the French he knew not; he was not the defender of it, except on a comparison with the former one. There were others in this country who certainly were the defenders of the French; those who professed to be the friends of the French principles, who adopted and avowed them; who had attempted to introduce into this country jacobin names and tenets; who had endeavoured to reduce them into practice; who had tried to subvert the constitution of England; who had treated with contempt the present form of government of France, because it bore too near a resemblance to some part of the constitution of England; who had expressed their abhorrence of it, because it was supposed to have some likeness of something that was English. This of itself proved to him the advantage the new constitution had over any thing which preceded it, because it had become the object of anger to these people, instead of being the theme of praise. But did any man mean seriously to assert, that no difference had taken place? When the rights of man were fully acted upon, there was but one representative body, containing in itself all powers legislative, executive and judicial, the only lawful center from which every thing was to proceed. The new constitution was a complete disclaimer of that wild and delusive theory. It was founded on experience as far as it went. They had admitted the falsehood of the doctrine of perfect equality. They had admitted (for he was not afraid of the word) of artificial distinctions, which fastened and kept together the mass of society. They had endeavoured to repair the breaches of their former system, a system of pure democracy; a system which united in it all the horrors of other systems, without the advantage of either. Instead of having one popular assembly, where the sudden and uncontrolled gusts of passion subdued the reason; instead of that condition in which the wisest



man was under the control, and subject to the correction, fury, and frenzy, of a mob; instead of being subject to the violence and fury of a lawless rabble, they had arrived at one point that would be useful to them, they had laid hold of one of the elements which contribute to form a social state for man,—a mixed form of government. They had separated the legislative from the executive part. They had formed two houses of legislature, and had so far imitated what contributed so much to the excellency of our constitution. Were these points to be got rid of by quaintly calling the two houses of legislature *old and young gentlemen*, as he had heard them called? The thing in plain English was this; they had now two houses of legislature instead of one popular assembly. They had now an executive government, separate from the legislative. These points constituted a difference between their present form of government and that of a pure democracy. Whether their present government was a machine that would last for a great length of time, he would not pretend to decide; he was not presumptuous enough even to guess. He only said they were so far wise when they preferred experience to theory. Nothing that the most ingenious artist had designed at once, could in his mind be equal in utility, application, and excellence, to that frame of government arising from the adoption of gradual improvements naturally suggested from time to time in the course of events, and which was the result of the experience of mankind in the course of ages.

But after all, he would ask, if he had rested all his security on the form of government lately adopted in France? Gentlemen had said, that he had insisted that the former government of that country was not capable of maintaining the usual relations of peace and amity with other powers, and that now he evaded that question. How had he conducted himself upon that point? Had he ever denied, that even then the government of France was totally incapable of being treated with? No such thing; he had thought that to compel the government of this country to treat with France was, under all the circumstances, inexpedient on our part, and because the propositions brought forward by



gentlemen on the other side were mere dry and abstract questions, leading to no particular good effect. We were not to conclude in the abstract, and without considering the situation of the enemy, without seeing what were their means and what their dispositions. But he had been asked, what he thought of the views of the French with regard to their future operations? He must answer, he could not say; but he would say this, that France would consult its own happiness by not endeavouring further to disturb the tranquillity of Europe, and by agreeing to just and equitable terms at this time; and he maintained that the state of their finances was in such a situation as not to enable them to proceed much longer in the contest without utter ruin to themselves. This subject indeed had already been amply discussed. As an additional argument, he desired only to call their attention to what had passed within these few weeks; he appealed to the dying confession of the old government, and to the infant acts of the new. If such were their exhausted state, it could hardly be supposed that they would soon again be inclined to revive the contest. These circumstances, which he had just mentioned, were almost all new; and, as he had endeavoured to prove, very different from any that had hitherto occurred. Some might imagine that there was sufficient security before that period: they could not then deny that there was more at this time.

Another part of the speech of the honourable gentleman who spoke last was extremely material to be attended to. He had been pleased to say, that the war had been to us a scene of disasters and defeats, except in the instances of sea engagements. That was the account which that honourable gentleman had pleased to give of the effect of our exertions. He said we had met with nothing but disasters, with only the exception of a few instances, and then he brought out a cold parenthesis with respect to our sea engagements. What! Could an Englishman speak lightly of our superiority on an element peculiarly the object of attention? of a superiority which formed the darling pride and honour of the country! That such an observation should come

from that honourable gentleman was extraordinary indeed. But was it true? Was there ever a war in which this country could boast of so many successful candidates for fame and glory? Was there ever a war in which the British character had been rendered more exalted, or in which those of our land as well as our sea service had achieved more military fame, from the highest in command to the lowest attendant? Had the honourable gentleman forgotten what the British had done in Holland and in Germany, and was the laurel not their due as much as if their efforts, in conjunction with others, had been successful? Was nothing to be said in praise of disappointed valour? Had the son forgotten the service of his father? Had that honourable gentleman forgotten what was accomplished by Sir Charles Grey in the West Indies, or did he feel no pride or gratitude to that illustrious officer for his conduct upon that service? Nor did he agree with that honourable gentleman in considering the present war in other respects so disastrous to this country, even supposing it to end as it now was. Let him look at the three different points that we had gained in the present contest; Martinique, Cape Nichola Mole, and the Cape of Good Hope; and then let him ask himself, whether they were not the most important that could fall into our hands? These points would shew whether the war was so very disastrous to us as the honourable gentleman had stated, and this would lead the house to reflect whether, as we had means in our hands, we had not reason to expect, if true to ourselves, to bring the war to a successful and honourable termination.

As to the discretion which gentlemen seemed so unwilling to give executive government upon this occasion, he must desire that the house would not interfere with it in the course of the negotiation, if they chose to attach to government any responsibility for what they were about to do. But if the amendment and the advice of its promoters were adopted, the discretion of government would be entirely taken away, and the responsibility would be doubled. All that was to be done must be done with a view to the relative situation of the enemy. The honourable gentleman said that ministers would have a loop-hole, and that

they would creep out of it, and, after promising to negotiate, carry on the war. He would say then, that if his Majesty had reason to believe there was a disposition in the enemy to negotiate, his Majesty would meet that desire, and endeavour to render it effectual. This address neither precluded his Majesty from entering into a negotiation immediately, nor did it bind him to make it in any form. He would say again, this must be left to the discretion of the executive government. It was said that they allowed only the present order of things to be such as they might treat with, and that they might suppose no other equally competent; consequently if another change were to take place, they should be just where they were. That, however, was not altogether the case. The permanency of the present government of France does not now, as formerly, so much connect itself with the permanency of a treaty of peace. Formerly the succession of parties was so rapid and so violent, that this country making peace with one, would have been sufficient reason for the other party to set it aside; but considering the situation to which France was reduced, no man could pretend to say it would be policy in any other set of men who might come into power, to reject a treaty of peace concluded with the present rulers. If it were asked, what he would do were the same miserable state to recur, which gave rise to the present contest, he should answer, that were he in possession of the means, he would again earnestly conjure the house and the country to repel the unjust attack, as they had done before.

Mr. Pitt concluded with observing, that neither the form of government of France, nor the circumstances which subsisted formerly, were any longer the cause of preventing a negotiation between France and this country, and that the whole question of peace must depend on the terms. For this reason he should vote for the address which he had proposed to the house as a proper measure in the present conjuncture of affairs, and of course against the amendment, as a measure intended to defeat the object of the address.

The amendment was negatived, and the original address passed, without a division.

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*December 10, 1795.*

THE order of the day being moved, for the third reading of the bill for the better security of his Majesty's person and government against treasonable and seditious practices,

MR. PITT rose as soon as Mr. Fox had spoken :

After the many important discussions, which for some days past have successively engaged your attention, it would ill become me to occupy much of your time at this advanced period of the debate ; but having had so large a share in bringing forward these bills, it is necessary that I should shortly advert to the arguments advanced against them by gentlemen on the other side. And first, I will take notice of the general objections, before I enter into the detail of the measures.

There is one circumstance, in which I agree with the right honourable gentleman who has just sat down, that these bills form an important crisis in the history of this country. The crisis is not less important than whether the king, lords, and commons, invested with the constitutional power of the country, and acting for the protection of the whole, shall unite to repel the attacks of those, who have proclaimed themselves the enemies of the constitution, and who now, under the pretence of exercising its privileges, are busied in carrying on the hostile designs which formerly they openly avowed, and which they have never since abandoned. There are two reasons from which I am apt to think that this crisis is determined. On this day a boldness of language and vehemence of assertion have been employed in arraigning the bills, which go beyond the bounds of parliamentary usage, and almost beyond the expressions of the English language. One gentleman \*, in a speech apparently studied, with a great deal of prepared and elaborate attack, has called these, *infernal bills*, and has used terms which, if meant to cha-

\* Mr. Jekyll,

racterise those bills, were too hyperbolical for the effusions of practical exaggeration. Another honourable gentleman \*, who has always been the champion exclusively of the democratic part of the British constitution, has said, that if he was by rank entitled to demand an audience, he would beseech the king to exert that power vested in him by the constitution, of putting his negative on these bills. What! does the honourable gentleman think it would be decorous in a grave hereditary counsellor of the crown, to go to his Majesty with his advice to reject these bills, which are to be offered to him by the other two branches of the legislature, as a testimony of their concern for the safety of his royal person, and which comprehend a salutary enactment in support of their own constitutional rights? That honourable gentleman has gone so far as to say, that such a counsellor would receive immortal honour by such advice. The right honourable gentleman who spoke last †, would advise his Majesty not to put his negative on the bills, but immediately to dissolve his parliament, which he said was his constitutional right. It certainly is part of the power and prerogative of the crown, to dissolve the parliament: but there has been a time when that right honourable gentleman was not quite so well convinced that such dissolution was an unquestionable exercise of a just prerogative; on the contrary, when the loud voice of the people was heard from all quarters, about twelve years ago, against a particular public measure, that honourable gentleman not only questioned the constitutional right to dissolve in such circumstances, but branded the dissolution which took place, as perfectly unconstitutional. If his Majesty should have advisers that would give such counsel, I shall only say, that they will not be those who are in the habit of giving his Majesty advice, and are responsible for the advice they give.

A strong proof to me that the crisis to which I have referred is determined, is the different language which I now find to be held by the right honourable gentleman †. He has no longer

\* Mr. Sheridan.

† Mr. Fox.

any hopes to prevent the bills from being enacted, but he trusts to the people in order to have them speedily repealed. I am glad to find that the right honourable gentleman is become so far a convert to the system of moderation, that he looks to see how many he can bring to concur with him in endeavouring to procure the repeal of the bills, if they should pass into laws, and not with how many he may think it prudent to resist their operation. I am glad to find that this doctrine of resistance, on which so much stress was laid in an earlier stage of the business, is not at this time uppermost in the mind of the right honourable gentleman. I trust that the avowal and justification of this doctrine will not sink deeper in the minds of any part of the community, and produce that impression which such a principle is calculated to make on violent and unenlightened minds. Should their ignorance be misled and their passions inflamed, dreadful indeed may be the consequences on their future conduct. I trust that the danger incurred to the public peace, will operate as a warning to prevent gentlemen from rashly and hastily broaching doctrines in the heat of debate, which may produce the most pernicious effects on the minds of others, long after their better judgment and more mature deliberation have eradicated them from their own.

Having noticed these general topics, I proceed now more particularly to consider the nature of the present bill. The subject resolves itself into two points. I shall first advert to that part of the bill, which affects the existing law of treason; and secondly, to the particular species of misdemeanour to which the bill is calculated to apply. First, the bill makes a conspiracy to do any thing that may tend to the king's death, to maim or to do him any species of bodily injury, to restrain and imprison his person, or to seek to make him alter, by force, the measures of his government, a substantive treason. These by the statute of the 25th of Edward III. are only made overt acts, of compassing and imagining the king's death. By the present bill they are made direct and substantive treasons. By the other part of the bill it is made treason to levy war,



to overawe the legislature. The right honourable gentleman has asked, might not the people attempt to influence the decision of the legislature by the force of opinion, by the violence of prayer? He forgets that the bill does not preclude the people from any peaceable and legal mode of bringing forward their opinion, in order to influence the sentiments of the legislature; that it does not interfere with their right, or prevent them from carrying to their representatives, in decent and orderly language, their sense of public measures. The treason described by the bill attaches only to those who levy war in order to overawe the legislature. Will the honourable gentleman contend, that levying war has any connexion with that mode of expressing opinion, which is intended to influence the proceedings of a legislative body? The right honourable gentleman objects to the preamble, which, by the by, he seems not to have read. — [Mr. Fox expressed some indignation at this charge.] I do not mean, that the right honourable gentleman ought to have read the preamble as part of his speech; but undoubtedly he seems not to have attended to the latter part of that preamble. He said, that he liked no preamble, which did not state truth. He affirmed, that the preamble made the attack on his Majesty the foundation of the bill, and contended, that though the bill purported to be for the security of his Majesty's person, and the preservation of his government, it did not, in fact, tend to give to either any additional security. If the right honourable gentleman had gone farther, and read the latter part of the preamble, he would have found, that it was not so narrowed and confined as he has described; that it stated not only the attack on his Majesty, as the ground of the bill, but also the seditious speeches and publications of evil-disposed persons.

In opposition to the right honourable gentleman, I maintain, that the provisions of the bill are calculated to give greater security to his Majesty's person and government, and that the grounds stated in the preamble, are commensurate to all the objects which the bill has in view. In all times, when the person of

the sovereign has been supposed to be endangered, a law of this nature has been passed. We are not now, for the first time, bringing forward a speculative act, of the probable consequences of which we cannot pretend to judge, but we are copying the wisdom of our ancestors—we are adopting the salutary precautions of former times. Acts, of which this is a transcript, were passed in the reigns of queen Elizabeth, and of Charles the Second. Elizabeth has been reproached as an arbitrary princess. It is certain that her life was threatened from many quarters. But how far is the charge that this act is a weak and inefficient measure, consistent with the description which has been given of her character? If she was an arbitrary princess, it surely is not likely, that where her own preservation was concerned, she should adopt measures inadequate to the purpose. The parliament of Charles the Second has been accused with making many sacrifices to the throne. It is not, therefore, probable, that in the excess of their loyalty, and the superabundance of their zeal, they should have neglected to put a sufficient guard around the king's person. Thus does the reasoning of those gentlemen, so far at least as concerns the efficacy of the measure, retort upon themselves. Such laws having passed in different periods of our history, and having in no instance been found insufficient, we have a strong and well-grounded presumption that they are well calculated to afford security to the person of the sovereign. They apply directly the penalties of treason to that species of offence against the person of the sovereign, to which, before, they could only have circuitously been brought to attach. They constitute substantive treasons, acts which before could only have been brought to prove the criminal intention. But an instance yet fresh in our memories, and which made too deep an impression on the house to be easily forgotten, will best illustrate the proposition. Supposing the person who threw the stone at his Majesty, on his way to parliament, to have been discovered and brought to trial, he would not have wanted an able and eloquent advocate to have pleaded, “that by throwing the stone

he had no intention of seriously injuring the person of the sovereign; that he was actuated by no deliberate, malicious purpose; that he was carried away by the impulse of the moment; that he meant, by throwing the stone, only to mark more strongly that sentiment of indignity to his Majesty, which excited the clamours of disapprobation among the surrounding multitude, and to express his own feelings of resentment from the continuance of the war." It is possible (I do not say that it would be justified by the sound construction of the law) even that such a defence, dressed up with ingenuity, and enforced with the eloquence with which it would not fail to be supported, might induce an honest jury to pronounce a verdict of acquittal. The intention of this bill is to cut off the possibility of such a defence being made in extenuation of such an act, to remove from the offender all hopes of escape by subterfuge and evasion, and by making the remedy more simple, to diminish the danger.

But it was said, why not make a new declaratory law? It was necessary that the present should be an enacting and not a declaratory law, because it only made that which was already treason by the statute of the 25th of Edward III. treason under another branch, and to be laid in a different manner in the indictment. As to the present bill making new treasons, which were not before known to the law of England, in contradiction to so injurious an assertion let me refer to the most grave and respectable authorities, to the writings of Lord Hale, and Sir Matthew Foster. These learned and venerable judges have given a history of the different statutes of treason, accompanied with their own comments. The object of the present bill is clearly to define the true meaning of the old law, which is now only to be drawn out of a long series of judicial expositions. It is in order to guard against all ambiguous and doubtful interpretation, at a time when it may be necessary to provide against a positive and immediate danger. Must not such be felt to be the case, when a daring attack has so recently been made on the person of his Majesty, and when the instance of



the precise danger against which the bill is directed, has happened under our own eyes, and at the door of parliament? The bill also makes an attempt to overawe the legislature, high treason. Is it necessary by any long deduction of argument to prove the necessity of such a precaution at a moment, when there exist societies hostile to the authority and existence of parliament? Those societies, meeting under the specious pretext of parliamentary reform, and the right of petitioning, have employed a language which sufficiently shews how far these were their real objects. They declared that the five hundred and fifty-eight gentlemen of St. Stephen's chapel may go about their business. They took every opportunity to vilify the character of the legislative body, to express their contempts of its authority, and to shew how much they were disposed to usurp its functions, and, if possible, to annihilate its existence.

The right honourable gentleman has dealt much in general topics of declamation. He said that he had never found that the lives of princes had been safe in proportion to the sanguinary laws and the severe punishments which had been instituted for their protection. I must remark, that the present is no new sanguinary law, that it creates no extraordinary severity of punishment. If the right honourable gentleman thinks that the person of the sovereign is not rendered safer by the punishments which the law has devised for his protection, this argument goes to repeal all the existing laws of treason. But he chooses to appeal to the testimony of experience, and to the example of former periods of the history of this country. He asks whether, notwithstanding the excessive loyalty of the parliament, and the extreme vigour of the laws, there were not some real plots in the reign of Charles the Second, besides the sham plots that were brought forward to serve a particular purpose? That in the course of that reign the parliament made many shameful concessions, I am ready to admit; but I can by no means allow that it was a blind indiscriminating spirit of devotion to the monarch which gave rise to the act, of which this bill is the counterpart. Neither can I allow that these persons

who were concerned in effecting the restoration, left principles altogether out of their view, though, perhaps, they neglected to employ some precautions which it would have been wise and proper to have adopted. In order to prove that some regard was had to principles in the act of the restoration, it is only necessary to refer to the history of the times, and to the persons concerned in that event. Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, and those who were connected with him, were not men entirely indifferent about the English constitution, or likely to be parties in a transaction, where its principles were entirely left out of contemplation. But with respect to this particular act, we have the sanction of the venerable name of Serjeant Maynard, who was one of the persons then employed in framing the bill for the security of his majesty's person. Immediately after the restoration, this truly constitutional lawyer said, "That except for that event he had been on the eve not only of surviving lawyers, but the laws."—[Mr. Pitt was reminded that these words were spoken not after the restoration, but after the revolution]—I admit my error—these words were spoken after the revolution; and is it likely that the venerable person, who, during the course of a long and honourable life, had preserved his attachment to the constitution, should have so entirely forgotten its spirit, or departed from its principles in framing that bill, so frequently referred to in the discussion? But I will ask the right honourable gentleman, does he attribute the plots in the time of Charles the Second, to the adoption of new laws, and the unusual severity of punishments; or does he not rather attribute them to the repeated breaches of law committed by that monarch, and to the attempts which he made, at different periods of his reign, to govern without a parliament? Among his other allusions to history, the right honourable gentleman refers to the reign of Robespierre. He asks, whether that tyrant derived any security from the system of terror which he employed as the engine of his government, and which he supported by a large military force? I appeal to the house,

how far this allusion can, with any propriety, apply to the present discussion? I appeal to the house, how far the question—whether a lawless, wanton, and barbarous system of proscription and carnage, is calculated to afford security to the tyranny from which it originates?—can possibly bear a comparison with the effect of those regulations, which we are now employed in enacting for the security of his Majesty's person, who is the object of the affections of his people, and for the preservation of that government, which is the best pledge for their happiness?

I shall now very shortly advert to the second part of the bill, which relates to misdemeanours. The first question is, whether, in any possible case of misdemeanour, transportation is a punishment which ought to be left to the discretion of the court? Misdemeanours are undoubtedly of very different sorts, and unless they can be marked out and graduated by some scale of legislative regulation, it is necessary, that, in adjusting the punishment, something should be left to discretion. The misdemeanours against which the present bill is directed, are of the most serious description. They are those offences which are productive of the worst consequences, which militate against the welfare of the whole community, which are calculated to disturb the order, and interrupt the tranquillity of society. If we look to the ordinary operation of law, and compare the species of misdemeanours described in this bill, with other offences which are at present punishable with transportation, I appeal to the house whether those offences, either in point of moral guilt, or of public danger, are to be compared to the acts against which this bill is calculated to guard. The right honourable gentleman has descanted on the hardship of the sentence of transportation, and talked of the compassion due to individuals, who, from having been placed in a better situation of life, had been doomed to experience its rigours. That it is a sentence at all times severe in its operation I cannot but admit; and that it becomes more peculiarly so when the person who is its object, has been placed in a respectable and



comfortable situation. That such a person should be compelled to abandon the society to which he had been accustomed, for companions of a very different description; that he should be doomed to relinquish his native land, and the comforts of his situation, and condemned to associate with the rudest and vilest of mankind, is a consideration which must naturally impress every mind with compassion. But while we feel compassion for the individual, we must recollect, that, as legislators, there is a duty which we owe to the public paramount to every other consideration. We must recollect, that if the punishment rises in proportion to the situation which the individual held in society, and that if our pity is more strongly excited from the consideration of these advantages he has forfeited, so also is the enormity of the crime aggravated by the same consideration; and he who, being placed in a respectable and comfortable situation, subjects himself to the penalties of law, wanting the temptation to err, wants also the apology for offence. If the ignorant and unenlightened individual, the blind and deluded instrument, is doomed to punishment for the crime which, from the instruction or the example of others, he has learned to regard as a virtue, with what sentiments must we look to the master-workman, who perverts the advantages of education, abuses the talents of nature, and employs the very distinctions which he derives from the present order of society, as means of attack against the existence of society itself? I have only to call upon the house, to consider what is the description of offence against which the punishment is directed. It is not to apply twice to the offence that may have previously been committed, but to the second instance of offence after conviction. An objection was started, that the species of crimes comprehended under the present bill, was of a description, of the nature of which it was not within the province of a jury to judge. My honourable friend (the attorney-general) has stated to the house what is his own practice. He has always left to the jury to decide, whether the innocent cause assigned was the real motive of the action: but in stating

this, he stated not only that mode of practice which is conformable to the liberality of his own sentiments, but which is sanctioned by the liberal spirit of the laws of England. There is no legal privilege which may not be made the pretext to cover the most illegal actions. I must particularly remark, in order to obviate misrepresentation, that nothing is made a crime by the present bill which was not before criminal, and subjected to a severe punishment by the common law of England.

After what I have already said, I have nothing farther to add, as I conceive the present bill to be supported on the plainest and simplest grounds on which any legislative provision was ever offered to the house.

The bill was afterwards read a third time and passed.

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*February 12, 1796.*

MR. WHITBREAD having moved the second reading of the labourers' wages bill, and the motion being seconded by Mr. Honeywood,

MR. PITT said, that not observing that gentlemen were prepared to deliver their sentiments on the present bill, he could not give a silent vote upon a question of so much importance, and at the same time of so much delicacy. In the interval which had taken place since the first reading of the bill, he had paid considerable attention to the subject, and endeavoured to collect information from the best sources to which he had access. The evil was certainly of such a nature as to render it of importance to find out a proper remedy; but the nature of the remedy involved discussions of such a delicate and intricate nature, that none should be adopted without being maturely weighed. The present situation of the labouring poor in this country, was certainly not such as could be wished, upon any principle, either of humanity, or policy. That class had of late been exposed to hardships which they all concurred in lamenting, and were equally actuated by a desire to remove. He

would not argue how far the comparison of the state of the labourer, relieved as it had been by a display of beneficence never surpassed at any period, with the state of this class of the community in former times, was just, though he was convinced that the representations were exaggerated. At any rate, the comparisons were not accurate, because they did not embrace a comprehensive view of the relative situations. He gave the honourable gentleman\* ample credit for his good intentions in bringing the present bill into parliament, though he was afraid that its provisions were such as it would be impolitic, upon the whole, to adopt; and though they were adopted, he believed that they would be found to be inadequate to the purposes which they proposed.

The authority of a very eminent calculator, Dr. Price, had been adduced to shew the great advance that had taken place on every article of subsistence, compared with the slow increase of the wages of labour. But the statement of Dr. Price was erroneous, as he compared the earnings of the labourer at the period when the comparison is instituted, with the price of provisions, and the earnings of the labourer at the present day, with the price of the same articles, without adverting to the change of circumstances, and to the difference of provisions. Corn, which was then almost the only food of the labourer, was now supplied by cheaper substitutions, and it was unfair to conclude that the wages of labour were so far from keeping pace with the price of provisions, because they could no longer purchase the same quantity of an article, for which the labourer had no longer the same demand. The simple question now to be considered was, whether the remedy for the evil, which was admitted in a certain extent to exist, was to be obtained by giving to the justices the power to regulate the price of labour, and by endeavouring to establish by authority, what would be much better accomplished by the unassisted operation of principles?

It was unnecessary to argue the general expediency of any

\* Mr. Whitbread.



legislative interference, as the principles had been perfectly recognized by the honourable gentleman himself. The most celebrated writers upon political economy, and the experience of those States where arts had flourished the most, bore ample testimony of their truth. They had only to inquire, therefore, whether the present case was strong enough for the exception, and whether the means proposed were suited to the object intended? The honourable gentleman imagined that he had on his side of the question the support of experience in this country, and appealed to certain laws upon the statute book, in confirmation of his proposition. He did not find himself called upon to defend the principle of these statutes, but they were certainly introduced for purposes widely different from the object of the present bill. They were enacted to guard the industry of the country from being checked by a general combination among labourers; and the bill now under consideration, was introduced solely for the purpose of remedying the inconveniences which labourers sustain from the disproportion existing between the price of labour, and the price of living.

He had the satisfaction to hear the honourable gentleman acknowledge, that if the price of labour could be made to find its own level, it would be much more desirable than to assess it by arbitrary statute, which in the execution was liable to abuse on the one hand, and inefficacy on the other. If the remedy succeeded according to the most sanguine expectations, it only established what would have been better effected by principle; and if it failed, on the one hand it might produce the severest oppression, and on the other encourage the most profligate idleness and extravagance. Was it not better for the house then to consider the operation of general principles, and rely upon the effects of their unconfined exercise? Was it not wiser to reflect what remedy might be adopted, at once more general in its principles, and more comprehensive in its object, less exceptionable in its example, and less dangerous in its application? They should look to the instances where interference had shackled industry, and where the best intentions have often produced

the most pernicious effects. It was indeed the most absurd bigotry in asserting the general principle, to exclude the exception; but trade, industry, and barter would always find their own level, and be impeded by regulations which violated their natural operation, and deranged their proper effect. This being granted, then, he appealed to the judgment of the house, whether it was better to refer the matter entirely to the discretion of a magistrate, or to endeavour to find out the causes of the evil, and by removing the causes, to apply a remedy more justifiable in its principle, more easy in the execution, more effectual in its operations, in fine, more consonant to every maxim of sound and rational policy. The evil, in his opinion, originated, in a great measure, in the abuses which had crept into the poor-laws of this country, and the complicated mode of executing them. The poor-laws of this country, however wise in their original institution, had contributed to fetter the circulation of labour, and to substitute a system of abuses, in room of the evils which they humanely meant to redress, and by engrafting upon a defective plan, defective remedies produced nothing but confusion and disorder. The laws of settlements prevented the workman from going to that market where he could dispose of his industry to the greatest advantage, and the capitalist, from employing the person who was qualified to procure him the best returns for his advances. These laws had at once increased the burdens of the poor, and taken from the collective resources of the state, to supply wants which their operation had occasioned, and to alleviate a poverty which they tended to perpetuate. Such were the institutions which misguided benevolence had introduced, and, with such warnings to deter, it would be wise to distrust a similar mode of conduct, and to endeavour to discover remedies of a different nature. The country had not yet experienced the full benefit of the laws that had already been passed, to correct the errors which he had explained.

From the attention he had bestowed upon the subject, and from the inquiries he had been able to make of others, he was

disposed to think we had not gone yet far enough, and to entertain an opinion that many advantages might be derived, and much of the evil now complained of removed, by an extension of those reformatations in the poor-laws which had been begun. The encouragement of friendly societies would contribute to alleviate that immense charge with which the public was loaded in the support of the poor, and provide by savings of industry for the comfort of distress. Now the parish officer could not remove the workman, merely because he apprehended he might be burdensome, but it was necessary that he should be actually chargeable. But from the pressure of a temporary distress, might the industrious mechanic be transported from the place where his exertions could be useful to himself and his family, to a quarter where he would become a burden without the capacity of being even able to provide for himself. To remedy such a great striking grievance, the laws of settlement ought to undergo a radical amendment. He conceived, that to promote the free circulation of labour, to remove the obstacles by which industry is prohibited from availing itself of its resources, would go far to remedy the evils, and diminish the necessity of applying for relief to the poor's rates. In the course of a few years, this freedom, from the vexatious restraint which the laws imposed, would supersede the object of their institutions. The advantages would be widely diffused, the wealth of the nation would be increased, the poor man rendered not only more comfortable but more virtuous, and the weight of poor's rates, with which the landed interest is loaded, greatly diminished. He should wish, therefore, that an opportunity were given of restoring the original purity of the poor-laws, and of removing those corruptions by which they had been obscured. He was convinced, that the evils which they had occasioned did not arise out of their original constitution, but coincided with the opinion of Blackstone, that, in proportion as the wise regulations that were established in the long and glorious reign of Queen Elizabeth, have been superseded by subsequent enact-



ments, the utility of the institution has been impaired, and the benevolence of the plan rendered fruitless.

While he thus had expressed those sentiments which the discussion naturally prompted, it might not perhaps, be improper, on such an occasion, to lay before the house the ideas floating in his mind, though not digested with sufficient accuracy, nor arranged with a proper degree of clearness. Neither what the honourable gentleman proposed, nor what he himself had suggested, were remedies adequate to the evil it was intended to remove. Supposing, however, the two modes of remedying the evil were on a par in effect, the preference in principle was clearly due to that which was least arbitrary in its nature; but it was not difficult to perceive that the remedy proposed by the honourable gentleman would either be completely ineffectual, or such as far to over-reach its mark. As there was a difference in the numbers which compose the families of the labouring poor, it must necessarily require more to support a small family. Now by the regulations proposed, either the man with a small family would have too much wages, or the man with a large family who had done most service to his country, would have too little. So that were the minimum fixed upon the standard of a large family, it might operate as an encouragement to idleness on one part of the community; and if it were fixed on the standard of a small family, those would not enjoy the benefit of it, for whose relief it was intended. What measure then could be found to supply the defect? Let us, said he, make relief in cases where there are a number of children, a matter of right and an honour, instead of a ground for opprobrium and contempt. This will make a large family a blessing, and not a curse; and this will draw a proper line of distinction between those who are able to provide for themselves by their labour, and those who, after having enriched their country with a number of children, have a claim upon its assistance for their support. All this, however, he would confess, was not enough, if they did not engraft upon it resolutions to discourage relief where it was not wanted. If such means could

be practised as that of supplying the necessities of those who required assistance by giving it in labour or affording employment, which is the principle of the act of Queen Elizabeth, the most important advantages would be gained. They would thus benefit those to whom they afforded relief, not only by the assistance bestowed, but by giving habits of industry and frugality, and in furnishing a temporary bounty, enable them to make permanent provision for themselves. By giving effect to the operation of friendly societies, individuals would be rescued from becoming a burthen upon the public, and, if necessary, be enabled to subsist upon a fund which their own industry contributed to raise. These great points of granting relief according to the number of children, preventing removals at the caprice of the parish officer, and making them subscribe to friendly societies, would tend in a very great degree to remove every complaint to which the present partial remedy could be applied. Experience had already shewn how much could be done by the industry of children, and the advantages of early employing them in such branches of manufactures as they are capable to execute. The extension of schools of industry was also an object of material importance. If any one would take the trouble to compute the amount of all the earnings of the children who are already educated in this manner, he would be surprised, when he came to consider the weight which their support by their own labours took off the country, and the addition which, by the fruits of their toil, and the habits to which they were formed, was made to its internal opulence. The suggestion of these schools was originally drawn from Lord Hale and Mr. Locke, and upon such authority he had no difficulty in recommending the plan to the encouragement of the legislature. Much might be effected by a plan of this nature susceptible of constant improvement. Such a plan would convert the relief granted to the poor into an encouragement to industry, instead of being, as it is by the present poor-laws, a premium to idleness, and a school for sloth. There were also, a number of subordinate circum-

stances, to which it was necessary to attend. The law which prohibits giving relief where any visible property remains should be abolished. That degrading condition should be withdrawn. No temporary occasion should force a British subject to part with the last shilling of his little capital, and compel him to descend to a state of wretchedness from which he could never recover, merely that he might be intitled to a casual supply.

Another mode also of materially assisting the industrious poor was, the advancing of small capitals, which might be repaid in two or three years, while the person who repaid it would probably have made an addition to his income. This might put him who received them in the way of acquiring what might place him in a situation to make permanent provision for himself.

These were the general ideas which had occurred to him upon the subject; if they should be approved of by any gentleman in the house, they might perhaps appear at a future time in a more accurate shape than he could pretend to give them. He could not, however, let this opportunity slip without throwing them out. He was aware that they would require to be very maturely considered. He was aware also of a fundamental difficulty, that of insuring the diligent execution of any law that should be enacted. This could only be done by presenting to those who should be intrusted with the execution motives to emulation, and by a frequent inspection of their conduct as to diligence and fidelity. Were he to suggest an outline, it would be this. To provide some new mode of inspection by parishes, or by hundreds—to report to the magistrates at the petty sessions, with a liberty of appeal from them to the general quarter-sessions, where the justice should be empowered to take cognizance of the conduct of the different commissioners, and to remedy whatever defects should be found to exist. That an annual report should be made to parliament, and that parliament should impose upon itself the duty of tracing the effect of its system from year to year, till it should be fully matured. That there should be a standing order of the house



for this purpose, and in a word, that there should be an annual budget opened, containing the details of the whole system of poor-laws, by which the legislature would shew, that they had a constant and a watchful eye upon the interests of the poorest and most neglected part of the community.

Mr. Pitt said, he was not vain enough to imagine that these ideas were the result of his own investigations, but he was happy to say, that they arose from a careful examination of the subject, and an extensive survey of the opinions of others. He would only add, that it was a subject of the utmost importance, and that he would do every thing in his power to bring forward or promote such measures as would conduce to the interest of the country. He concluded with apologizing for having taken up so much of the time of the house: the fact was, the importance of the subject had led him into a further discussion, than it had been his attention to go into, and he was desirous of shewing the honourable gentleman that he had spared no pains to collect information upon it; and although he gave the honourable gentleman every possible credit for his humane and laudable motives, yet seeing the subject in the light in which he did, he was compelled to give his negative to the motion.

Mr. Whitbread afterwards, waving his motion for the second reading of the bill, moved for leave to bring in a bill to repeal the statute of the 5th of Elizabeth; which was granted.

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*February 15, 1796.*

On a motion by Mr. Grey, for an address to his Majesty, "that he would be graciously pleased to take such steps as to his royal wisdom should appear most proper, for communicating directly to the Executive Directory of the French Republic, his Majesty's readiness to meet any disposition to negotiation on the part of that government, with an earnest desire to give it the fullest and speediest effect,"

MR. PITT spoke to the following purport:

Much as the honourable gentleman \* has introduced into his speech, connected with the origin and conduct of the war, from which I must decidedly dissent; much as I differ with him on many of the topics he has urged, and on many of the principles he has laid down, as grounds for his motion; and firmly as I am persuaded that no measure could be more hostile to the true interests of this country, than the line of conduct which he has proposed to be adopted; there is still one view of the subject on which I believe it impossible there can be any difference of opinion. If the state of the country, and the sentiments of a great majority of this house are such, as I have reason to suppose, there cannot, indeed, be any wide or essential difference as to the general result. But if, after the explanation which I may be able to give with respect to the state of this country, and the position of the enemy, the honourable gentleman shall still choose to persevere in his motion, there are one or two consequences, which might otherwise be drawn from any declaration of mine on the present occasion, against which it may be necessary for me to guard. I must, therefore, guard against any imputations which may hereafter be brought forward, either as to the insincerity of any declaration which I may express in favour of peace, or as to the inefficiency of the measures taken to facilitate its progress. However I may be disposed to favour that object, which the motion seems principally to have in view, I can by no means concede the grounds on which it has been followed up;—I mean that from a view of our situation, and of the events of the war, we should discover such shameful humiliation, such hopeless despondency, as to abandon every thing for which we have formerly contended, and be disposed to prostrate ourselves at the feet of the enemy. If the necessity of our condition, if the sense of having been baffled, should operate so strongly as to induce us to make overtures of peace upon any terms; if every consideration of policy, and every feeling of decent and honourable pride must be sacrificed to the extreme pressure of our af-

\* Mr. Grey.

fairs, we must then indeed be bound to receive the law of the conqueror. This situation of affairs the honourable gentleman has not indeed developed, but has pretty plainly insinuated it as a ground for his motion. I trust, however, that the state of this country is far different, and that no temporary reverse in the fortune of war, no internal pressure in our domestic situation, has yet produced this mortifying humiliation, this dreadful alternative.

But the honourable gentleman, as an impeachment of the sincerity of ministers with respect to peace, has alluded to an argument, which was formerly supported from this side of the house—that we could not make peace without humbling ourselves to the enemy, and without discovering that we were baffled in our attempts, and exhausted in our resources. From this he no doubt meant to insinuate that ministers were at no time sincere in their wishes for peace, and were disposed to throw every obstacle in its way. He does not think proper to mention, that this argument was made use of at a time when the opponents of the war, availing themselves of a series of misfortunes and disappointments which had befallen the confederacy, took the opportunity to press their motion for an immediate peace. We then contended, that the evil was not so great as to exclude hope, or to damp enterprize, that no circumstances had taken place under which a firm and manly resistance became impracticable, and that we might still look with confidence to the effect of a vigorous and persevering prosecution of the war. In proportion as this truth has become manifest to the enemy themselves, do we feel ourselves inclined to adopt a more conciliating tone. In proportion as the situation of things is inverted, the objection, which we formerly made, is superseded. That situation which the honourable gentleman chose only to suppose as theoretical, I contend to be practical; that our successes have been such as to obviate any obstacle to negotiation on the score of national honour; and so far I undoubtedly am of opinion, that the difficulty is infinitely diminished.

In stating, however, generally, my own sentiments, and those



of his Majesty's ministers, I must protest against the practice of being called upon from day to day, from week to week, from time to time, to declare what are precisely our views on the posture of affairs, or what are the steps, which we may think it necessary in consequence to adopt. The progress of the measures, which such a situation of affairs as the present may render necessary, can only be left safely to the conduct of the executive government. If the house are of opinion that the business cannot be safely left in the hands of ministers, the proper step would be to address his Majesty to remove them from their situation; and not to endeavour to interrupt the affairs of government by calling on the house of commons to interfere with the functions of executive authority. The honourable gentleman himself seemed to be aware of this, as he admitted the principle to be correct; he said, he did not contend against the constitutional degree of confidence which an executive government ought to have from the legislative power, while its conduct was unexceptionable.

The honourable gentleman says, that he does not confide in ministers: on that ground he has been led to give an uniform opposition to their measures during the war; and on the same ground he now expresses his distrust of the sincerity of their wishes respecting peace. Unquestionably the honourable gentleman, who places no confidence in ministers, is entitled to oppose their measures and to question their sincerity; but he is bound to conform to established rules, and not to effect any change in a constitutional question. I mean, whenever this house, adopting a motion like the present, instead of addressing his Majesty to remove his ministers, apply in order to take the business into their own hands, they deprive the country of every chance for a successful negociation. On a question so critical, I am afraid lest I should overstep the line of my duty, by entering too much into detail. It is a subject on which it is impossible to descant so minutely as the honourable gentleman seems to expect, without breaking in upon that principle which has guided every discreet minister in treating subjects of this nature. If I

felt that generally, as applicable to subjects of this kind, how much more must I feel it on this particular occasion, considering, as I must, the peculiar situation of the country at this moment? —Let gentlemen look at the situation of affairs on the continent; let them look at the situation of our enemy; what has been their plan and practice? what has been the case in this respect since the honourable gentleman reminded the house of the matter? What, I would ask, has been the effect of the separation of the general confederacy against France, and the weakening of the power of that confederacy?—power, that long ere this, might have achieved much advantage, had they kept in union. Recollect what has happened upon the appearance of that separation, and then conjecture what might have been the effect, had the confederacy remained entire. The destruction of the enemy, perhaps, or at least the diminution of its strength to such an extent, as to have brought forward an honourable repose and lasting tranquillity to Europe. Let me ask the house, whether or not, every man did not believe it was the policy and the aim of France to use all endeavours to separate the confederacy against her? Let me ask, whether she did not seem to triumph even in the hope of being able to effect it? Let me ask, whether any thing remained of the hope of France but this separation, to enable her to dictate to Europe? Let me ask, whether any thing could, therefore, be so desirable to France as the detaching of that confederacy, which, for the honour and safety of Europe, was formed against her? And then let me ask, whether there ever was, or could be, a cause in which it would be more the duty of every good man to prevent any jealousy, or the rising of any suspicion, or the creating of any disunion, among those, who, if they remain entire, may yet give honourable and lasting peace to Europe? If the directory have yet any hope of dictating terms to Europe, it is, no doubt, on the same policy which they have hitherto found so beneficial, that they ground their expectations of future success. If there is any thing by which they can expect to attain this situation of proud eminence, this object of their favourite ambition, it is by being able to instil

jealousy, to sow the seeds of division, and engender sources of animosity among those of the confederacy, who yet remain united to oppose their power. On preserving entire the remains of that confederacy, depends the only hope of impressing on them a conviction of the necessity of yielding to reasonable terms, and of bringing the war to a desirable conclusion. And perhaps in this point of view, an attention to the preservation of that confederacy becomes a duty, not only for ministers, but for all those persons who are anxious for the public welfare, and interested in the national character; for all those who are desirous of an honourable peace, and adverse to any peace purchased with dishonour: and if such be the case, it is important for them to consider whether the measures which they may wish to persuade government to adopt, be such as may oblige the country to give up the chance of a successful peace altogether, or to take it on terms inconsistent with the honour of the nation. If we receive propositions of peace on the terms of the honourable gentleman, the considerations "speedy and honourable," then become separated. We must in that case choose the alternative; if we adopt the motion, a peace "speedy and honourable" we cannot have. But an honourable peace we may have, if we persevere in the same firm and vigorous line of conduct which we have hitherto pursued. This I know, not from any immediate communication with the enemy, not from any communication of their disposition for peace, but from the statement which they have themselves furnished of their defective and almost exhausted means for carrying on the war. On this ground I oppose the motion. If I were not sincerely, and anxiously desirous of peace, I should be forfeiting my duty to the country, and violating the trust which I hold from my public situation; but I can never consent to the proposition of peace, unless the terms should be consistent with our present honour, suitable to our present condition, and compatible with our future security.

Having said this with the general view I have of the subject of peace, if the question be thought a necessary one, I will say



a few words as to the message from his Majesty to parliament about two months ago, because it was said, that no step had been taken since for a negociation; I hope the house will recollect what I said upon that occasion. I said then, that the house should not compel, by its vote, the executive government to enter into a negociation, bound down and fettered with any acknowledgment of our own weakness: precisely the same thing do I desire of the house upon the present occasion. Those who differ from me in general, and who have thought the war altogether unnecessary, I did not then, nor do I now, expect to convince; but the house at large thought as I do. To the house at large, therefore, I will now say, that the question, as the honourable gentleman has himself stated it, is a very narrow one—"Whether, because after having received the message from his Majesty no communication has taken place of any subsequent measures, the house, by adopting a motion of this sort, ought to compel the executive government, bound hand and foot, to commence a negociation?" If the honourable gentleman entertains such distrust of the sincerity of ministers, as to suppose them disposed to take no measures to carry into effect their own declarations, I shall certainly not argue with him on that point. But in order to be consistent, the argument of the honourable gentleman must infer, either that overtures have been made on the part of the enemy, or that some favourable opportunity has occurred to this country for the purpose of commencing negociation, which have been rejected subsequent to the period of the message.

If a negociation should be entered into, it is evident, that in order to give it its full effect, we should be careful not only to keep up the strict letter of our engagements with our allies, but to maintain with them full concert and harmony. I therefore, take upon me to assert, that since his Majesty's message has been delivered to this house, ministers have taken every measure consistent with the general interests of the country, and with the attention and regard due to her allies, to enable his

Majesty to take any opportunity, either to meet overtures for negociation, or to make such overtures as might be found most expedient. That no etiquette with respect to who should make the first overture—no difficulty in finding a mode of making it, appeared to government to be an obstacle to negociation, if in other respects there appeared to be a probability of leading to just and honourable terms; the great point being what prospect there was of obtaining such terms. Measures have been taken to ascertain these points, and are now in train; and if the enemy are sincere, they must speedily lead to a negociation. Whether that negociation will lead to peace I cannot say, because that depends upon whether the exhausted state of the enemy will incline them to set on foot that negociation with a view to a peace, very different as to the terms of it from any which their public declarations have for a long time past seemed to indicate: if this is not the case, I must say a speedy peace is impossible. I wish ardently for peace—but not for any but an honourable peace. The country has a right to expect it from its own strength and resources, and from a knowledge of the relative situation of France.

I admit that the honourable gentleman in his speech separated negociation from the terms. But in other passages he talked of negociation as leading to an immediate peace. I do not hold out a prospect of immediate peace, nor do I state any period that I can ascertain for it; I only say it will not be the fault of his Majesty's servants if the period is remote. The enemy must be however ready to make it on terms which we have a right to think just and honourable; it rests not on us only, but also on the enemy, whether this may lead to any negociation at all, or whether negociation will lead to peace. It all depends on this, whether the disposition of the enemy shall be more moderate than any we have lately seen of their professions. Sorry I am to see such a seeming disposition on the part of the enemy, as may render them, in case of success, desirous of preventing any effect to pacific dispositions, which they may now profess,

or even of retracting them. Whether this may lead to a moderation in practice which I have not seen yet, I know no more of, as I have said already, than what any other gentleman has an opportunity of knowing. What has been made public I hope is not authentic; however, by what has been circulated in this country, and through the continent with industry, and what they are said to hold out as the boon of peace to the English nation, it does not appear as if they were very desirous of meeting us on honourable terms; for I have heard that they are ready to give peace, because the government of England asks it. Thus then we are to have peace if we shall sue for it; that is, if we shall abandon that for which our ancestors have fought so bravely. If we shall abandon our allies; if we shall abandon the safety of all Europe, and sacrifice to France every thing that is dear to us, and offer to them homage, and grant them an unconditional and uncompensated restitution of all that has been their's, and all that has been in the possession of those whom they have forced to be their allies—then, in return for this, they will offer to the people of England their fraternization.

I have thus stated the degree to which we have been ready to go. I hope I shall not be told some weeks hence I have been insincere. We have not been ready to grasp at a treaty such as you have heard from me. There is but one situation in which a minister of this country should convey such terms to the enemies of it: that is, when the abjectness of the country and its willingness to sue for peace is proclaimed by parliament, so as to deprive us of vigour and energy, and make us unwilling to strive for the maintenance of ourselves. If this motion be adopted, what overtures we shall receive, or what we shall not, I will not pretend to determine; but while we shew any confidence in our resources, I do not fear that a negotiation of measures that are in train may prove effectual: at what period, for reasons I have already stated, it is impossible for me to imagine. I am not apprehensive that parliament will not leave this to take the course which the practice of our ancestors lays down to



us, and which reason dictates. I say, if we and our allies are not false to each other and ourselves, we shall have an opportunity of restoring to Europe peace, on safe, just, and honourable grounds, and nothing but a premature motion like the present, can deprive us of that blessing; and therefore, as a lover of my country, and of justice, I oppose this motion.

The motion passed in the negative ;

Ayes ..... 50

Noes ..... 189

*February 26, 1796.*

Mr. William Smith having on a former day submitted to the House a string of resolutions upon the subject of the late loan, setting out with establishing the principle of an open and public competition, and, by a series of facts and deductions, asserting the conclusion—that the loan, then under consideration, was a bad and improvident one for the public, and that the minister in conducting the negociation, and in adjusting the terms, had been guilty of a departure from his own principles, and of a breach of his duty ;—the debate on this important question was resumed this day.

Upon the first resolution being moved, “ That it appears to this House, that the principle of making loans for the public service, by free and open competition, uniformly professed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, has been very generally recognized, as affording the fairest prospect of public advantage,”

Mr. Sylvester Douglas, in a speech of considerable detail, moved an amendment, to leave out all the words of the resolution after the words “ public service,” and to insert other words, which would make the amended question stand as follows, “ That it appears to this House, that the principle of making loans for the public service by competition, which was introduced, and has in general been acted upon, by the present Chancellor of the Exchequer, has been productive in many instances of great public advantage; but that this principle could not be applied in its full extent to the bargain for the late loan, consistently with the peculiar circumstances of the case, and with that attention to the equitable claims of individuals, which ought always to be shewn in transactions with them on the behalf of the public.”

MR. PITT: —

On a subject naturally so interesting to my personal feelings, as well as so important in a public view, I am anxious to address the house at a period of the debate, before their attention is more exhausted. And they will forgive me when I am called upon to meet a charge of the most direct and important nature, in which my personal character, as well as my official situation, as a trustee for the public, are materially implicated, and which has been so diligently and ably pursued, (though I might be content to rest my defence on the impression of the arguments and facts which have been brought forward by my honourable friends) if, even at the hazard of some repetition, I should advert to the points which press most closely upon my own immediate feelings. Indeed I should not do justice to myself, far less should I do justice to the public, if I did not state them in as plain and intelligible a way as possible; at the same time, I will endeavour to reply shortly to many things that have been asserted so much at large in the speech of the honourable gentleman, who brought forward the subject, and were likewise repeated at considerable length in the resolutions and papers before the house.

The honourable gentleman\*, who has lately spoken, said, that if my answer to one point was satisfactory, he would withdraw his support from the charge against me. Though, in the course of what I have to say, I shall not be inattentive to his question, it cannot be expected that I should narrow my defence to that point. It cannot be supposed that from any recent declarations which have been made by the honourable gentlemen, exculpating me from all charge of personal corruption, that from any equivocal and imperfect disclaimers, accompanied, when retracted, by artful suggestions and fresh insinuations, I should have forgotten that it was broadly stated by gentlemen on the other side, who moved for a committee of inquiry, that there was ground of suspicion that the distribution of the loan had

\* Mr. Francis.

been employed for the purpose of corrupt influence. They exempted me, indeed, from any charge of having regulated that distribution from any view of sordid gain to myself; and I then took the liberty to say, feeling as I did on the subject, that I was not obliged to them for the exception, or the sort of candour that dictated it. If they formerly asserted that, if the inquiry was gone into, and substantiated, the result would be, to establish the actual interference of corrupt influence; if such declarations were rash and unguarded; if they were dictated by the intemperate warmth of debate, or pushed beyond all bounds of justifiable discretion, and if they are now retracted as unjust and unfounded, I certainly have reason to rejoice in the progress which has been made, in consequence of the diligent and sober investigation of a committee towards a decision so much more grateful to my character and feelings. Undoubtedly there is no charge which can be brought against the transaction of the loan, there is no instance of neglect, there is no error of judgment, there is no want of prudence, which I should not most seriously and severely regret; but still I should consider such charges as light, compared with that which formed the prominent point, and the most weighty one in the present accusation, viz. that in the transaction of the late loan, I had acted on motives of corruption, partiality, and undue influence, to answer political and interested purposes, both within and without doors. I cannot therefore help remarking, that while the ground on which the enquiry was originally brought forward, "that the loan had been employed as the means of corrupt and pernicious influence," is now professed to be abandoned, instead of being, as the house had a right to expect, either substantiated by proof, or wholly and completely done away, it seems to be but half retracted by the honourable mover of the resolution, and to be supplied by ambiguous hints and fresh insinuations. After avowing that it was his opinion, that the committee ought to have asked for no lists, he discovers a strange coincidence between the names in the list of subscribers, and the names of a certain respectable body



of merchants and bankers, assembled for a great object of political discussion; a coincidence which could not be the effect of accident. If this be true, and the fact originated in design, most certainly that design must have arisen from a corrupt motive; and if not for personal gain, that motive must have resulted from a desire to obtain the means of corrupt influence.

The honourable gentleman\* brings no such charge against me. His mode of acquittal is, however, somewhat singular; he imputes to me no motive of corrupt influence or undue partiality. He desires me to say nothing of the transaction relative to the Hamburgh bills, on which nevertheless some part of the resolutions is founded, and which has been ascribed to the motive of a determination to reward the services of an individual by a sacrifice of the public interest. The right honourable gentleman therefore openly disclaims all accusation, while he supports the resolutions which contain the very charge he so much affects to disclaim, drawn up with all the art and address of the most cunning special pleader; and certainly no resolutions could be more ably drawn up, if the avowed purpose of them had been to censure and undermine any man's public and private character. The honourable gentleman's ability in the management of this point has been really singular. — He acquits me of any intention of benefiting myself, or corrupting parliament by means of the loan; but then insists that the loan was improperly made, and that it must have been so made for some undue motive or other; that is to say, he acquits me of two specific undue motives, and exhorts me not to speak, in order that I may leave myself undefended against the suspicion of an endless train of indefinite undue motives, which ingenious insinuation and artful malice may think proper to raise against me. I do not deny that the nature of a transaction may be such as to afford ground for the suspicion of an undue motive, even though the motive itself may not appear on the face of the transaction. If the transaction however be pecuniary, there

\* Mr. Francis.

are only three motives which can be supposed to operate—personal emolument, private partiality, and public influence; and if, after the most accurate investigation, strong evidence be brought to prove that none of these motives can be traced in the present transaction, I have some right to take to myself credit that no such motives existed, and that the charge has been fully refuted.

The honourable gentleman who moved the resolutions, stated that the committee had decided that there was no ground for suspicion of any corrupt interference; and thus, so far as their judgment went, had put their negative on that ground, on which the enquiry had originally been undertaken. The last speaker\* on the other side has stated, that he disliked the mode in which that committee was constituted. It might have been supposed that a committee, which afforded to every man, who was actuated by jealousy, suspicion, by public zeal, or, if such a motive could be supposed to insinuate itself, by private pique, an opportunity to state his sentiments, and to display his vigilance, was of all others the least liable to objection. It seemed, indeed, probable, in the first instance, that it would be deprived of the assistance of two honourable gentlemen† whose abilities and diligence none would dispute. These honourable gentlemen, when it was declared that the committee should be an open one, and that all who attended should have voices, had, upon due deliberation no doubt, desired their names to be withdrawn, and seemed to consider themselves as disgraced by being put in a situation in which they should only exercise their privilege in common with every member of that house. I am happy, however, to find that these gentlemen revised their first decision, that both assisted in the committee, and that one of them in particular distinguished himself by his active and constant attendance. It is rather singular that the decision of the committee, by which they negative all idea of corrupt interference, is the only one which the honourable mover conceives to be already so well reco-

\* Mr. Francis.

† Mr. Sheridan and Mr. Grey.

gnized, that he excludes it from that string of resolutions which he has presented as an analysis of the whole report.

Another honourable gentleman states, that he thinks on that point the committee have no right to give an opinion, and he has declared so this day for the first time. If there is any thing forcible in this objection, it certainly is very unfair to bring it forward now for the first time. Why was it not stated when the report was received? If the house had then thought that their committee had exceeded their powers, the report would have been recommitted. But why is that opinion expressed by the committee? They assign it as a reason for not having given a particular detail of evidence, which by the resolution of the house they were required to give, and which they had declined to bring forward, on the ground that it was inconvenient to individuals. It is surely a little hard that gentlemen should first receive the whole of the evidence the committee thought right to report, and then not admit the excuse for the omission of that part of the evidence which was principally exculpatory of the person whose conduct was the object of censure.

An honourable gentleman complains, that there was a want of notice of the intention to come to such a resolution in the committee. Notice was however given the day before by my right honourable friend\* who spoke last, and who had not only answered that point, but also explained the individual use that had been made of the word "colleagues;" which meant to apply generally to all, who attended the committee, who certainly were colleagues on that enquiry and not merely official persons; and I cannot admit that it was not likely that so attentive and so able a man as the chairman of that committee would have allowed any important resolution to be adopted without a fair notice, even if there had been such a want of attention and industry in those gentlemen on the other side, who took a principal share in the investigation, as to afford any room for such a charge. I therefore think myself entitled to assume the benefit of that opinion of the committee, not with

\* Mr. Steele.



those qualifications, equivocations, and reserves, with which it has been fettered by the honourable mover of the resolutions, but as a clear, full, and decided testimony, that there was no distribution of the loan for the purpose of corrupt influence. As to the other charges of undue partiality to any individual for services supposed to have been performed to the government, it shortly resolves itself into the question, whether, by the mode of settling the loan, I have contrived to enrich Mr. Boyd, by a sacrifice of the public interest? I am aware it has been said that no such charge was meant to be conveyed; but why should such frequent allusion have been made to the *Hamburgh bills*, except for that express purpose? They would not have been mentioned had it not been with a view to give countenance to such an insinuation. I shall not, however, now fully enter into the nature of that transaction, as an opportunity will soon be presented when it will be brought forward as an object of separate inquiry. I will only at present shortly state the substance.

In every loan bill, parliament insert a clause holding out a premium for the prompt payment of the sums subscribed, foreseeing that government may possibly have occasion for the money before the instalments become due in the regular course of payment. Last year, though large sums were paid up, still the public exigencies were such as to render additional supplies necessary, and the terms offered were not sufficiently tempting to induce individuals to come forward with their money. Under these circumstances government entered into a negotiation with a monied house to advance such sums as were wanted for the service. The aid of parliament at that time could not be had without calling it together at a great trouble and inconvenience, both public and private. In consequence of this, treasury warrants were offered; but Mr. Boyd said, that bills of exchange were a more mercantile commodity; and, to avoid the expense of stamps, they were dated at *Hamburgh*, to make them foreign bills of exchange, they otherwise being inland and subject to a stamp.

In the whole transaction, however, there was nothing questionable or suspicious, nothing unwarrantable on the part of government which gave Mr. Boyd an exclusive right, far less a discretionary power, to dictate the terms of a future loan. — So much for the subject and substance of the transaction, by far the most material part of every such transaction; the bills themselves were nothing more than mere forms of security to those who advanced the money. The giving them was only an engagement on the part of government to make good the sums advanced for the public. Whether that engagement was executed on stampt or unstampt paper, whether written on paper or on parchment, added nothing to the validity of the security. The particular manner of executing it, was such as was dictated by the necessary regard for secrecy. As to the case of a merchant, in whom it was affirmed such a transaction would be highly discreditable and suspicious, there was nothing in common between the conduct of a merchant in the management of his private affairs, and that of the government of a great country under the pressure of public exigencies. No comparison would, therefore, hold for a moment. It might reasonably be suspected, that a merchant resorted to such a mode of transacting business in order to supply the deficiency of his capital, and to support a fictitious credit. In the case of government, the sums were already voted, they were only wanted for immediate service, and funds were provided to reimburse those who advanced them as soon as their claims became due. But was this a service of such magnitude and importance, as to be conceived to give Mr. Boyd such strong claims upon government as could be construed into a right to dictate the terms of the loan? Mr. Boyd never had entertained such an idea, and I confess that this part of the transaction was executed with the same liberality and zeal as every other service to government which he has undertaken to perform. It is supposed that, in order to reward Mr. Boyd, the most likely method which I could devise, was to bestow upon him a loan of such considerable extent, in which he only



is a holder among many others. Is it probable that in order to reward him individually, the chancellor of the exchequer at a time of severe pressure, and when under the necessity of making such large demands from the house, should add eight or ten per cent. to the public burthens of the year ?

All this, however, turned upon a question of evidence, and with respect to the evidence before the committee, it is a principle in human nature, that where persons give evidence in a case which involves their own interests and merits, their judgments will imperceptibly and involuntarily be biassed to one side of the question ; and all such evidence requires to be weighed with the most scrupulous attention, and to be received with some qualification. I am sure I mean to say nothing offensive or disrespectful to either gentleman, but I apply this principle equally to Mr. Boyd and to Mr. Morgan. How far Mr. Boyd had a share in the transaction of the Hamburgh bills, and how far that had any influence on the disposition of the loan, appears from the testimony of that gentleman himself. He declares that he formed no claim from that circumstance ; that he had not the smallest expectation of any preference, nor did he conceive that such an idea existed. And it is to be remarked, that Boyd's evidence was clear and consistent with itself, distinct, plain, and explicit, while Morgan's, in many material points, was inconsistent, and not only contradicted by himself, but by every authority and evidence that was confronted with it. After stating that the governor of the bank had warned him of something, which was likely to secure to Mr. Boyd a preference to the loan, he had, Mr. Morgan says, upon being questioned, more particularly affirmed, that he had not mentioned what that something was. Afterwards he said, that the governor of the bank described the transaction of the Hamburgh bills, as likely to secure a preference to Mr. Boyd. So much for Mr. Morgan contradicting himself. The governor of the bank, upon being examined, expressly stated, that he had not mentioned a syllable about the bills ; that he had only said, that Mr. Boyd had a claim from the loan of last year, which he con-



ceived him to be too sagacious to allow to escape him. If I had determined to avail myself of an opportunity to throw the loan, at all events, into the hands of Mr. Boyd, could I not have found some better mode of achieving my purpose, than that which I pursued? Should I have held out the system of competition? Should I have deliberately announced my intention for that purpose, and have invited competitors, when I was aware that the result could tend only to beget animosity and disappointment? Should I have expressed my reluctance to the claims of Mr. Boyd, and yielded to them only upon the conviction that they were well founded? If nothing was got by the intention which I at first announced of a free competition, but increasing difficulty, and accumulated embarrassment, as to the mode in which the bargain was ultimately settled, is not this internal evidence better than any parole proof, that can be adduced, that I was completely sincere in the month of October, when I first announced that intention, and that I had formed no determination to benefit Mr. Boyd at any rate, by giving him a preference? I had not then examined his claim, because it had not then been stated to me so distinctly, and because it had not been brought to my recollection by the governor of the bank. If, then, I was under the influence of error, it was because I carried the system of competition strong in my mind, and because, looking solely to that, I neglected, in the first instance, to attend sufficiently to the claims of Mr. Boyd, and kept them back longer than, as it afterwards appeared to me, in justice I ought to have done.

As to the injury which Mr. Morgan and his friends may have suffered, from having prepared their money in order to bid, that surely cannot be seriously insisted on, while it is recollected that the final adjustment of every loan is matter of so much uncertainty, and connected with so many collateral considerations. No communication from the bank, as to competition, ever took place, except with respect to Mr. Boyd. How could Mr. Morgan contend, that he had sustained injury from having prepared his property to qualify himself to be a bidder, when

he stated, that till the 23d of November he never began to doubt that there would be a competition? His own account of his information on this subject was rather whimsical; it came from a confidential friend of whom he knew nothing, who informed him that he had heard from a third person, that Boyd was sure of the loan; and yet, though his information led him to know more than the rest of the world, he went on with his speculations, and never doubted that there would be a competition till the twenty-third of November; he therefore would not be responsible for any loss that the parties might sustain from such speculations. All lists or plans that were handed about were merely speculations, particularly Morgan's; and if the parties have sustained any injury, it lies entirely with him and themselves.

The next point was the nature of Boyd's claim, and the impropriety of departing from the system of competition. As to the claim of Mr. Boyd, it has been proved that I, at first, testified strong prejudices and great reluctance, which were not overcome till it was brought forward in a shape in which it was no longer controvertible; that I admitted the principle of competition, and receded from it only when fair and just grounds were adduced on the part of an individual to warrant a deviation from the general system. Here a great deal of minute criticism has been displayed by gentlemen on the other side, with respect to Mr. Boyd's letter. I was in the situation of a judge, trying a cause between Mr. Boyd and the public; acting as a trustee for the latter on the one hand, and a person called upon to decide on the justice of the claim of an individual on the other. The claim of Mr. Boyd may have been asserted too strongly, or the contrary might have been the case. Was the consideration of the manner in which his cause was urged, however, to have any influence on my mind in the decision on the justice of his claims? I now stand here accused. I have been placed in the high situation of a judge, and now I appear in the more humble one of a person accused, defending myself against a foul charge. It has been said, that I was bound to pay no attention to the claims of Mr. Boyd for a preference, because there was



no express agreement, no specific terms of engagement for that purpose. Gentlemen seem to think that unless government were bound down by specific terms, an engagement of this sort entered into by them should not be abided by; might there not, however, be some common understanding, some implied condition, some strong and clear construction, equally binding on the minister of the country to the observance of the claim in point of honour and justice? No personal inconvenience shall ever induce me to depart from the terms of what I consider an honourable dealing, when a claim is made up founded on an understood and implied condition, on the nature of things, and a practice recognized by a constant usage. Had there been an express agreement, it would have unquestionably been presented to my recollection, but this was no reason why an explanation properly understood, and clearly made out, should not receive its due degree of attention. In transacting all loans, there must be preliminary points of conversation; a good deal of discussion naturally takes place, some particulars of which are committed to memorandums, and others suffered to pass more loosely.

In the loan of 1795, it was proposed by the contractors that there should be no payment on any new loan till February of the succeeding year, to which I readily assented, not conceiving that the exigencies of the public service would require any money to be advanced before that period. Of this promise I was reminded by the governor of the bank of England, and I was the more confirmed in its propriety, as I found that no new loan had taken place in such circumstances, even where no assurance direct, or by implication had been given.

Mr. Pitt then noticed the connection in which contractors stood with government, distinct from the scrip-holders, and which gave to them particular claims. Contractors had, in the first instance, to treat with ministers, and were immediately responsible for the fulfilment of the term. Government neither could ascertain, nor had any thing to do with the scrip-holders; they had no claim—were under no engagement; the contractors



were. As to that part of the resolutions which censured the terms of the loan, it was easy for ingenious men to connect or confound facts by stating some that were true, and omitting others that were equally true, so as to make their reasoning upon them apply to the particular purpose for which they were thus drawn up. In this place he would say, that his greatest objections to the resolutions were, that in them the honourable gentleman had contrived to put together a collection of truths, in such a manner as to convey all the malignity and venom of falsehood. He adverted to the term *open and free competition*, from which he was said to have departed, and remarked, that in order to secure the interests of the public, and prevent the manœuvres of designing persons, every competition must, to a certain degree, be qualified—at least by the consideration how far the parties were competent to fulfil their bargain. He never meant any but a system of qualified competition; and from this it was not true, as stated in the resolution, that he had made a total departure. He then justified the propriety of his own conduct, in not having left himself at the mercy of Boyd and Co. but when the qualified competition which he held out was declined by the others, in having taken such precautions as still enabled him to name his own terms. But he was asked, why did he not send the loan back again into the city? What; after it had been rejected by two sets of gentlemen, and when it would come in the less inviting shape of qualified competition! When the most favourable terms could only bring forward three parties, was it probable that the less favourable terms would produce more? When a day was fixed for conversation on the loan, it was necessary that some interval should take place, that the parties might deliberate on the terms; when all was finally arranged, he saw no good that could possibly arise from a delay of forty-eight hours, a period of suspense and uncertainty of which advantage might be taken to occasion fluctuations in the public funds;—one circumstance that made him determine not to let the contractor leave his house till the bargain was closed. He accounted for the delay which took place between

the time the bargain was made, and its being intimated to the house, by his being disappointed in bringing on the budget, as he first intended, on the 2d of December. It was well known to the house, the pressure and importance of the public business which then was in daily agitation, and which totally precluded him from making the necessary arrangements for the budget. He defended the manner in which he had exercised his discretion in making the terms ; and having described the state of the country, though by no means so impoverished and exhausted as opposition would represent it, he thought credit was due to those efforts by which government had been able to contract for so large a loan in the fourth year of the war, upon even better terms than had been obtained in former years ; which he exemplified by a comparison of this with the last year's loan, which was sanctioned by parliament without a single objection ; and would leave it to the house, to decide whether, in the present instance, he most deserved their censure or approbation.

The next point was the effect of the king's message ; those who knew him best, knew that it was not in his mind when the bargain was made. But if he had foreseen it, he could not have foreseen the rise that took place in the stocks. He was no party to any such fraud ; but to whatever cause that temporary rise was to be ascribed, it certainly was not produced by the message only. Whatever ideas of peace or negociation, people who wished for it might entertain, there was nothing more in the message, than a declaration that the time was arrived, to which his Majesty had alluded in his speech to parliament. Any one who carried its meaning farther, was either too sanguine in expectation, or intended to raise hopes which could not be realized. Besides the message, there were other collateral causes for the sudden rise of the stocks—the unexpected victories of the Austrians, the increasing distresses of the enemy, the serene and tranquil appearance of affairs at home, compared with that cloudy and turbulent aspect which

they bore during the period when the terms of the loan were originally settled (the discussion of the two bills). All these causes, coupled with the intimation that peace only depended on the disposition of the enemy, combined to give that sudden and extraordinary rise to the funds, which singly they would have failed to produce. After all, the extent of the benefit to the contractors, and of the loss to the public, had been greatly over-rated. An exaggerated statement of figures had been brought forward in order to be echoed through the country. It had been stated, that the profit upon the loan amounted to 12 per cent. It amounted to this sum only for four days, during which stocks were exceedingly fluctuating; so that altogether it did not bear this price for above a few hours. So that in order to make out this profit, all the shares must have been disposed of within these few hours, a circumstance which would have brought such a quantity into market, as must have occasioned a depression, that would greatly have overbalanced the temporary rise. All the profit is stated to center in the individual contractors, and all the concurring and unforeseen causes, which operated to give so favourable a turn to the terms of the loan, to have been the result of my pre-meditation. Under these circumstances, I am said to have given away a sum of two millions one hundred and fifty thousand pounds, by the mode of negotiating the present loan. With this assertion concludes the charge against me; and with desiring the house to attend to the extravagance of this assertion, I conclude my defence.

On a division, the amendment was carried,

Ayes ..... 171

Noes ..... 23

and Mr. Smith's remaining resolutions were severally put and negatived.

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*May 10, 1796.*

MR. FOX, in pursuance of the notice he had previously given, this day submitted to the House a motion for an entire change in the system hitherto pursued by ministers in regard to external politics; concluding his speech with moving,

“ That an address be presented to his Majesty, most humbly to offer to his royal consideration, that judgment which his faithful commons have formed, and now deem it their duty to declare, concerning the conduct of his ministers in the commencement and during the progress of the present unfortunate war. As long as it was possible for us to doubt from what source the national distresses had arisen, we have, in times of difficulty and peril, thought ourselves bound to strengthen his Majesty’s government for the protection of his subjects, by our confidence and support. But our duties, as his Majesty’s counsellors, and as the representatives of his people, will no longer permit us to dissemble our deliberate and determined opinion that the distress, difficulty, and peril, to which this country is now subjected, have arisen from the misconduct of the king’s ministers, and are likely to subsist and increase as long as the same principles which have hitherto guided these ministers, shall continue to prevail in the councils of Great Britain.

“ It is painful for us to remind his Majesty of the situation of his dominions at the beginning of the war, and of the high degree of prosperity to which the skill and industry of his subjects had, under the safeguard of a free constitution, raised the British empire, since it can only fill his mind with the melancholy recollection of prosperity abused, and of opportunities of securing permanent advantages wantonly rejected. Nor shall we presume to wound his Majesty’s benevolence by dwelling on the fortunate circumstances which might have arisen from the mediation of Great Britain between the powers then at war, which might have ensured the permanence of our prosperity, while it preserved all Europe from the calamities which it has since endured. A mediation which this kingdom was so well fitted to carry on with vigour and dignity, by its power, its character, and the nature of its government, happily removed at an equal distance from the contending extremes of licentiousness and tyranny.

“ From this neutral and impartial system of policy, his Majesty’s ministers were induced to depart by certain measures of the French government, of which they complained as injurious and hostile to this country. With what justice those complaints were made, we are not now called upon to determine, since it cannot be pretended that the measures of France were of such a nature as to preclude the possibility of adjustment by negotiation; and it is

impossible to deny, that the power which shuts up the channel of accommodation must be the real aggressor in war. To reject negotiation is to determine on hostilities; and, whatever may have been the nature of the points in question between us and France, we cannot but pronounce the refusal of such an authorised communication with that country, as might have amicably terminated the dispute, to be the true and immediate cause of the rupture which followed.

“ Nor can we forbear to remark, that the pretences under which his Majesty's ministers then haughtily refused such authorised communication have been sufficiently exposed by their own conduct, in since submitting to a similar intercourse with the same government.

“ The misguided policy which thus rendered the war inevitable, appears to have actuated ministers in their determination to continue it at all hazards. At the same time we cannot but observe, that the obstinacy with which they have adhered to their desperate system is not more remarkable than their versatility in the pretexts upon which they have justified it. At one period the strength, at another the weakness, of the enemy has been urged as motives for continuing the war; the successes, as well as the defeats of the allies, have contributed only to prolong the contest; and hope and despair have equally served to involve us still deeper in the horrors of war, and to entail upon us an endless train of calamities. After the original professed objects had been obtained by the expulsion of the French armies from the territories of Holland and the Austrian Netherlands, we find his Majesty's ministers, influenced either by arrogance, or infatuated by ambition and vain hope of conquests, which, if realized, could never compensate to the nation for the blood and treasure by which they must be obtained, rejecting, unheard, the overtures made by the executive council of France, at a period when the circumstances were so eminently favourable to his Majesty and his allies, that there is every reason to suppose that a negotiation, commenced at such a juncture, must have terminated in an honourable and advantageous peace: to the prospects arising from such an opportunity they preferred a blind and obstinate perseverance in a war which could scarce have any remaining object but the unjustifiable purpose of imposing upon France a government disapproved of by the inhabitants of that country. And such was the infatuation of these ministers, that, far from being able to frame a wise and comprehensive system of policy, they even rejected the few advantages that belonged to their own unfortunate scheme. The general existence of a design to interpose in the internal government of France was too manifest not to rouse into active hostility the national zeal of that people: but their particular projects were too equivocal to attract the confidence, or procure the co-operation of those Frenchmen who were disaffected to the government of their country. The nature of these plans was too clear not



to provoke formidable enemies, but their extent was too ambiguous to conciliate useful friends.

“ We beg leave farther to represent to your Majesty, that at subsequent periods your ministers have suffered the most favourable opportunities to escape of obtaining an honourable and advantageous pacification. They did not avail themselves, as it was their duty to have done, of the unbroken strength of the general confederacy which had been formed against France, for the purpose of giving effect to overtures for negotiation. They saw the secession of several powerful states from that confederacy, they suffered it to dissolve without an effort for the attainment of general pacification. They loaded their country with the odium of having engaged it in a combination charged with the most questionable and unjustifiable views, without availing themselves of that combination, for procuring favourable conditions of peace. That from this fatal neglect, the progress of hostilities has only served to establish the evils which certainly might have been avoided by negotiation, but which are now confirmed by the events of the war. We have felt that the unjustifiable and impracticable efforts to establish royalty in France, by force, have only proved fatal to its unfortunate supporters. We have seen with regret the subjugation of Holland, and the aggrandizement of the French republic, and we have to lament the alteration in the state of Europe, not only from the successes of the French, but from the formidable acquisitions of some of the allied powers on the side of Poland, acquisitions alarming from their magnitude, but still more so from the manner in which they have been made; thus fatally learning that the war has tended alone to establish the very evils, for the prevention of which it was avowedly undertaken.

“ That we now therefore approach his Majesty to assure him, that his faithful commons heard, with the sincerest satisfaction, his Majesty's most gracious message, of the 8th of December, wherein his Majesty acquaints them, that the crisis which was depending, at the commencement of the present session, had led to such an order of things, as would induce his Majesty to meet any disposition to negotiation on the part of the enemy, with an earnest desire to give it the fullest and speediest effect, and to conclude a general treaty of peace, whenever it could be effected on just and equitable terms, for himself and his allies.

“ That from this gracious communication, they were led to hope for a speedy determination to this most disastrous contest, but that with surprise and sorrow they have now reason to apprehend that three months were suffered to elapse before any steps were taken towards a negotiation, or any overtures made by his Majesty's servants.

“ With equal surprise and concern they have observed, when a fair and open conduct was so peculiarly incumbent on his Majesty's ministers, considering



the prejudices and suspicions which their previous conduct must have excited in the minds of the French, that, instead of adopting the open and manly manner which became the wisdom, the character, and the dignity of the British nation, they adopted a mode calculated rather to excite suspicion, than to inspire confidence in the enemy. Every expression which might be construed into an acknowledgment of the French republic, or even an allusion to its forms, was studiously avoided; and the minister, through whom this overture was made, was, in a most unprecedented manner, instructed to declare, that he had no authority to enter into any negotiation or discussion relative to the objects of the proposed treaty.

“That it is with pain we reflect that the alacrity of his Majesty’s ministers in apparently breaking off this incipient negotiation, as well as the strange and unusual manner in which it was announced to the ministers of the various powers of Europe, affords a very unfavourable comment on their reluctance in entering upon it, and is calculated to make the most injurious impression respecting their sincerity on the people of France. On a review of many instances of gross and flagrant misconduct, proceeding from the same pernicious principles, and directed with incorrigible obstinacy to the same mischievous ends, we deem ourselves bound in duty to his Majesty, and to our constituents, to declare, that we see no rational hope of redeeming the affairs of the kingdom but by the adoption of a system radically and fundamentally different from that which has produced our present calamities. Until his Majesty’s ministers shall, from a real conviction of past errors, appear inclined to regulate their conduct upon such a system, we can neither give any credit to the sincerity of their professions of a wish for peace, nor repose any confidence in their capacity for conducting a negotiation to a prosperous issue. Odious as they are to an enemy, who must still believe them strictly to cherish those unprincipled and chimerical projects which they have been compelled in public to disavow, contemptible in the eyes of all Europe from the display of insincerity and incapacity which has marked their conduct, our only hopes rest on his Majesty’s royal wisdom and unquestioned affection for his people, that he will be graciously pleased to adopt maxims of policy more suited to the circumstances of the times than those by which his ministers appear to have been governed, and to direct his servants to take measures, which, by differing essentially as well in their tendency, as in the principle upon which they are founded, from those which have hitherto marked their conduct, may give this country some reasonable hope, at no very distant period, of the establishment of peace suitable to the interests of Great Britain, and likely to preserve the tranquillity of Europe.”

The motion being read, Mr. PITT immediately rose :

It is far from being my intention, Sir, unnecessarily to detain the attention of the house, by expatiating at any great length on the various topics introduced into the very long and elaborate speech which you have now heard pronounced. The right honourable gentleman who delivered it, thought proper to lay considerable stress on the authority of a celebrated orator of antiquity \*, who established it as a maxim, that, from a retrospect of past errors, we should rectify our conduct for the future; and that if they were errors of incapacity only that had occasioned our misfortunes, and not an absence of zeal, strength, and resources to maintain our cause, and secure our defence, instead of such a disappointment being a cause of despair, it should, on the contrary, invigorate our exertions, and reanimate our hopes. That such a retrospect may, in most cases, be wise and salutary, is a proposition which will hardly be denied. It is evident that our appeal to experience is the best guard to future conduct, and that it may be necessary to probe the nature of the misfortune, in order to apply a suitable remedy. But in a question so momentous and interesting to the country, as undoubtedly the present question must be, if it can be deemed expedient to run out into a long retrospective view of past calamities, surely it must be far more so to point out the mode by which their fatal effects may be averted, and by proving the origin of the evils complained of, to judge of the nature and efficacy of the remedies to be applied. Whatever, therefore, our present situation may be, it certainly cannot be wise to fix our attention solely on what is past, but rather to look to what still can, and remains to be done. This is more naturally the subject that should be proposed to the discussion of a deliberative assembly. Whatever may have been the origin of the contest in which we are engaged, when all the circumstances attending it are duly considered, it has had the effect of uniting all candid and impartial men, in

\* Demosthenes.



acknowledging the undisputed justice of our cause, and the unjust and wanton aggression on the part of the enemy. Such having been, and still, I presume to say, being the more general opinion, prudence then must tell us to dismiss all retrospective views of the subject and to direct the whole of our attention to what our actual situation requires we should do. The right honourable gentleman must have consumed much time in preparing the retrospect he has just taken of our past disasters; and he has consumed much of his time in detailing it to the house; but instead of lavishing away what was so precious on evils which, according to him, admit of no remedy or change, would it not be more becoming him, as a friend to his country, and an enlightened member of this house, to attend to what new circumstances may produce, and to trace out the line of conduct which in the present state of things it would be prudent to pursue?

In the close of his speech the right honourable gentleman alluded to his former professions respecting the prosecution of the war. According to these professions, he, and every gentleman who thought with him, declared, that should the enemy reject overtures of peace, or appear reluctant to enter into negotiation, when proposed, then he, and every man in the country would unite in advising the adoption of the most vigorous measures; and that not only such conduct on the part of the enemy would unite every Englishman in the cause, but that while it united England, it must divide France, who would be indignant against whatever government or governors should dare to reject, what was the sincere wish of the majority of its inhabitants. Instead, therefore, of expatiating on the exhausted state of the financial resources of the country, and running into an historical detail of all our past calamities, a subject which almost engrossed the right honourable gentleman's speech, I must beg leave to remind him of those his former professions, and invite him to make good the pledge he has so often given to this house, and to the country, and not to enflame the arrogance and unjust pretensions of the enemy, by an exaggerated statement of our past misfortunes, or of our present inability to retrieve them by a spirited and vi-



gorous prosecution of the war. His feelings as an Englishman, and his duty as a member of parliament, must assuredly induce the right honourable gentleman to exert his abilities in suggesting the most effectual means of insuring our success in the contest, especially since he heard the late arrogant and ambitious professions of the enemy. All retrospective views I therefore for the present must regard as useless, and think it far more wise and urgent to provide for the success of future exertions; not that I decline entering into the retrospect to which I am challenged, which I am ready to do with the indulgence of the house, but because I feel it of more serious importance to call your attention, not to the retrospect alone, but rather to the actual state of things, which the right honourable gentleman has entirely omitted.

And, first, let me observe, that, while I endeavour to follow the right honourable gentleman through his very long detail of facts and events, I shall follow him as they bear on a particular conclusion which he wishes to draw from them, but which the country does not call for, and which it will not admit. What is the conclusion to which he wishes to lead us? Does it not go to record a confession and retractation of our past errors? an avowal that, instead of a just and necessary war, to which we were compelled by an unprovoked aggression, we are embarked in a contest in which we wantonly and unjustly engaged, while our defence is evidently such as our dearest interests call for, and which a regard to justice, and to every moral principle, legitimates and sanctifies? Can, then, this house adopt a motion, which directly contradicts its recorded opinions, and which tends to force on it new councils; or, in other words, to oblige it to rescind all the resolutions it has come to since the commencement of the war? The right honourable gentleman has, in rich and glowing colouring, depicted our exhausted resources; the want of vigour in our measures, and the inattention of ministers to seize on the more favourable opportunities for making peace. He also assumes, that the sole cause of the war, was the restoration of monarchy in France; and that this cause after-

wards shifted into various other complexions. All these charges, however, as well as the unjustness of the war, he establishes only by presumption. The right honourable gentleman then goes back to 1792, when he says the first opportunity was offered of our procuring peace to Europe, but of which ministers did not avail themselves. He also refers to a speech made by me on the opening of the budget of that year, which he describes as having been uttered in a tone of great satisfaction, triumph, and exultation. It is true, indeed, that I felt much satisfaction in exhibiting to the country the high degree of prosperity to which it had then reached;—not less satisfaction, I am sure, than the honourable gentleman seems to feel in giving the melancholy picture that his motion has now drawn of its present reduced situation; and I felt the more vivid satisfaction in viewing that prosperity, as it enabled us to prepare for, and enter into, a contest of a nature altogether unprecedented. Now, however, when that prosperity is over, the honourable gentleman dwells on it rather rapturously, though it seemed little to affect him at the time it was enjoyed. But, not only are ministers accused of having neglected the opportunities of making peace, but when they have attempted overtures of that nature, they are charged with insincerity, or with holding forth something in the shape and make of these overtures that must create suspicions of their sincerity in the enemy, or provoke their disgust. What can countenance such an accusation, I am sadly at a loss to discover: for at the periods alluded to, every motive of public duty, every consideration of personal ease, must have induced me to exert the best of my endeavours to promote a peace, by which alone I could be enabled to effect the favourite objects I had in view, of redeeming the public debt and the 4 per cents., as alluded to by the honourable gentleman. No stronger proofs could be given of the sincerity of government to promote and ensure peace, than was then given by his Majesty's ministers; and if they were disappointed, the fault is not with them, but their conduct must be understood and justified by the imperious necessity, which in 1793 compelled them to resist an unprovoked aggression. As to



the accusations urged against us of not offering our mediation, or even refusing it when solicited, they are equally of little weight. Are ministers to be blamed, for what it would be hazardous in them to attempt, and would it not be hazardous to propose a mediation where both parties were not ready to agree? To have erected ourselves into arbiters, could only expose us to difficulties and disputes, if we were determined, as we ought to be, to enforce that mediation on the parties who refused to admit it. And what is the great use which the honourable gentleman seems to be so eager to derive from that peace, if so procured? Is it fit that we should go to war in order to prevent the partition of Poland? In general policy, I am ready to confess, that this partition is unjust; but it does not go, as is said, to overturn the balance of power in Europe, for which the right honourable gentleman, as it suits his argument, expresses greater or less solicitude; for that country being nearly divided equally between three great powers, it can little contribute to the undue aggrandizement of either. But how strange did it seem in that right honourable gentleman, who inveighed so strongly against the partition of Poland, to censure ministers for their endeavours to prevent the partition of Turkey, when it was the establishment of the principle, that this country could not interfere to prevent the partition of Turkey, precluded the possibility of any interference with respect to Poland!

As to the latter transactions that have occurred between this country and France, they are too recent in the memory of the house, to require that I should call their attention to them. The resolutions to which we have come on this subject, are too sacred and too solemn, the opinion too settled and too deeply formed, to be lightly reversed. We cannot, surely, forget the first cause of complaint, allowed to be well founded, and the famous decree of the 19th of November, which was an insult and an outrage on all civilized nations. Seditious men, delegated from this country, with treason in their mouths, and rebellion in their hearts, were received, welcomed, and caressed by the legislature of France. That government, without



waiting until it had even established itself, declared hostilities against all the old established systems : without having scarcely an existence in itself, it had the presumption to promise to interpose to the destruction of all the existing governments in the world. All governments alike fell under its vengeance ; the old forms were contemned and reprobated ; those which had stood the test of experience, whether monarchy, aristocracy, or mixed democracy, were all to be destroyed. They declared that they would join the rebellious subjects of any state to overturn their government. And what was the explanation received from M. Chauvelin on these subjects of complaint? Did it amount to any more than that the French would not intermeddle with the form of government in other countries, unless it appeared that the majority of the people required it to be changed? As to their declaration against aggrandizement, without stopping to argue a point that is so extremely clear, I will only refer the house to their whole conduct towards Belgium. They declared that they would never interfere in the government of Belgium, after it had consolidated its liberties ;—a strange way of declining interference when a form of constitution was forced upon it, bearing the name, but not the stamp of liberty, and compelling the Belgians to consolidate and preserve it. With respect to another cause of war, viz. the opening of the Scheldt, their explanations regarding that circumstance, and their intentions upon Holland, were equally unsatisfactory ; their ultimatum was, that they would give no further satisfaction ; and their refusing a fair explanation made them the aggressors in reality, if not in form. Still, however, the channel of negotiation was not cut off by this country : as long as the king of France retained a shadow of power, M. Chauvelin continued to be received in an official capacity ; and even after the cruel catastrophe of that unfortunate monarch, his Majesty's minister at the Hague did not refuse to communicate with general Dumourier, when he expressed a wish to hold a conference with him relative to some proposals of peace. When all these opportunities had been offered and neglected, they

declared war, and left us no choice, in form or in substance, but reduced us to the necessity of repelling an unjust aggression. In every point of view, they therefore were evidently the aggressors, even according to the right honourable gentleman's own principles, and we certainly took every precaution, that it was either fit, or possible to do, to avoid it.

I cannot help wishing to recall the attention of the house to the general conclusion of what I have stated, for upon that rests all I have to say on the first part of the right honourable gentleman's propositions. If the house had been hurried by passion into the war, if it had been hurried by the false opinion of others, or by any unjust pretensions of its own, would it go to the enemy to atone for its misconduct, and accede to such conditions as the enemy might offer? Could it happen that a war not ordinarily just and necessary, when applied to every moral principle, should in form be so untrue, that, after three years standing, it should be found all illusion? If the house cannot acknowledge these things, much less can I believe, admitting all the depreciated statements of our resources to be true, and founded to such an extent as to make us submit almost to any humiliation, that last of all we should submit to the pride and ambition of an enemy, whose hypocrisy, injustice, tyranny, and oppression we have so repeatedly witnessed, reprobated, and deplored: and yet that was what the right honourable gentleman proposed. He proposed that we should bow down before the enemy, with the cord about our necks, when we have not felt the self-reproach of doing wrong; to renounce and abjure our recorded professions, and receive a sentence of condemnation, as severe as undeserved. This I contend would be to renounce the character of Britons. Even if, by the adverse fortune of war, we should be driven to sue for peace, I hope we shall never be mean enough to acknowledge ourselves guilty of a falsehood and injustice, in order to obtain it.

The right honourable gentleman's next accusation against ministers is, that they have been guilty of a radical error, in



not acknowledging the French republic. It is said this has been the bar to all treaty : this has prevented every overture in subsequent situations. I admit that it has so happened, that we have never acknowledged the republic, and I admit also, that no application nor overture for peace, on the part of this country, has been made till lately. I admit, that after the siege of Valenciennes, I did say it was not then advisable to make conditions, and I admit also, that when we struggled under disadvantages, I was equally averse ; whence the right honourable gentleman infers, “ that if you will not treat for peace when you are successful, nor treat for it when you are unfortunate, there must be some secret cause, which induces us to believe you are not disposed to treat at all.” Is it reasonable, I ask, when a just hope is entertained of increasing our advantages, to risk the opportunity which those advantages would secure of making better terms ; or, is it reasonable when we experience great and deplorable misfortunes, to entertain a just apprehension of obtaining a permanent and honourable peace, on fair and permanent conditions ? These are the principles on which I have acted, and they are raised upon the fair grounds of human action. If success enough were gained to force the enemy to relinquish a part of their possessions, and we might not yet hope to be wholly relieved from similar dangers, except by a repetition of similar efforts and similar success, was it inconsistent for a lover of his country to push those efforts further upon the reasonable expectation of securing a more permanent and honourable peace ? And, on the other hand, when we experienced the sad reverse of fortune, when the spirit of our allies was broken, our troops discomfited, our territories wrested from us, and all our hopes disconcerted and overthrown, did it argue a want of reason or a want of prudence not to yield to the temporary pressure ? The same situations to a well-tempered mind would always dictate the same mode of conduct. In carrying on the war, we have met with misfortunes, God knows, severe and bitter ! Exclusive of positive acquisitions however, have we gained nothing by the change which has taken place in France ?



If we had made peace, as the right honourable gentleman says we ought to have done, in 1793, we should have made it before France had lost her trade ; before she had exhausted her capital ; before her foreign possessions were captured, and her navy destroyed. This is my answer to every part of the right honourable gentleman's speech relative to making peace at those early periods.

But a discussion is once more introduced as to the object of the war. Ministers have repeatedly and distinctly stated the object, but it is a custom on the other side of the house, to take unguarded and warm expressions of individuals in favour of the war, for declarations of ministers. Thus, many things which fell from that great man (Mr. Burke) have since been stated as the solemn declaration of government ; though it is known that, to a certain extent, there is a difference between ministers and that gentleman upon this subject. But then it is to be taken as clear, that ministers are not only anxious for the restoration of monarchy in France, but the old monarchy with all its abuses. That ministers wished to treat with a government in which jacobin principles should not prevail ; that they wished for a government from which they could hope for security, and that they thought a monarchy the most likely form of government to afford to them these advantages, is most undoubtedly true ; but that ministers ever had an idea of continuing the war for the purpose of re-establishing the old government of France, with all its abuses, I solemnly deny. If, for the reasons I have before stated, it would not have been prudent to have made a peace in the early stage of our contest, surely it would not have been advisable when the enemy were inflated with success. The fate of the campaign of 1794 turned against us upon as narrow a point as I believe ever occurred. We were unfortunate, but the blame did not rest here : that campaign led to the conquest of Holland, and to the consternation which immediately extended itself among the people of Germany and England. What, however, was the conduct of ministers at that period ? If they had given way to the alarm, they would have

been censurable indeed : instead of doing so, they immediately sent out expeditions to capture the Dutch settlements, which we may now either restore to the stadtholder, if he should be restored, or else we may retain them ourselves. If, instead of that line of conduct, his Majesty's ministers had then acknowledged the French republic, does the right honourable gentleman, does the house, suppose that the terms we should then have obtained would have been better than those we can now expect ? Then, it was asked, why did not administration negotiate for peace before the confederacy was weakened by the defection of Spain and Prussia, because, of course, better terms might have been obtained when the allies were all united, than could be expected after they became divided ? It undoubtedly would have been a most advantageous thing, if we could have prevailed upon the kings of Spain and Prussia to have continued the war until the enemy were brought to terms, but that not having been the case, we at least had the advantage of the assistance of those powers, while they remained in the confederacy. Before any blame can attach upon ministers upon this ground, it will be necessary to shew, that, prior to the defection of Prussia and Spain, terms were proposed to us, which we rejected. Whether these two powers have gained much from the peace they have made, is not a question very difficult to be answered. Whether Spain was really in that state that she could not have maintained another campaign, without running the risk of utter destruction, is a point upon which I do not choose to give an opinion ; but with respect to Prussia, she certainly enjoys the inactivity of peace, but she has all the preparation and expense of war.

The right honourable gentleman again adverts to the form of government, which, he says it was the intention of ministers to establish in France, and alludes particularly to the affair at Toulon ; and from that subject the honourable gentleman makes a rapid transition to the case of M. de la Fayette. With respect to what might be the treatment of that unfortunate gentleman, the cabinet of Great Britain had no share in it, nor did ministers think themselves warranted in interfering with the allies



upon the subject. With regard to Mr. Lameth, the right honourable gentleman certainly did ministers justice, when he said they could feel no antipathy to that person; and they certainly did feel great reluctance in ordering him to quit the kingdom: but as to the motive which induced them to take that step, they did not conceive it to be a proper subject of discussion. The act of parliament had vested discretion in the executive government, and they must be left to the exercise of it.

The right honourable gentleman has also alluded to the situation of the emigrants, and asserted, that if government were of opinion that there was no prospect of making an attack with success upon France, it was the height of cruelty to have employed them. This however was not the case, there were at different times well grounded expectations of success against that country, and surely, it cannot be considered as cruelty to have furnished the emigrants with the means of attempting to regain their properties and their honours.

The right honourable gentleman has also thought proper, in his speech, to dwell at considerable length on the state of the enemy's finances. He is willing to admit that their finances are, as he says I have stated them to be, in the very gulph of bankruptcy, in their last agonies. But then the right honourable gentleman proceeds to ask me, whether, notwithstanding this financial bankruptcy, they have not prosecuted their military operations with increased vigour and success? Whether, notwithstanding these their last agonies, they may not make such dreadful struggles as may bring their adversaries to the grave? I will not now detain the house by contrasting the finances of this country with those of the enemy; I will not now dwell on the impossibility of a nation carrying on a vigorous war, in which it is annually expending one third of its capital; but I will tell the right honourable gentleman that the derangement of the French armies at the latter end of the last campaign, the exhausted state of their magazines and stores, and their ultimate retreat before the allied troops, furnish a convincing proof that the rapid decline of their finances begins to affect in the



greatest degree their military operations. How far their recent successes, on the side of Italy, deserve credit to the extent stated by the right honourable gentleman, I shall not take upon me to say: I have had no intelligence on the subject, and therefore shall offer no opinion to the house.

The next topic which I have to consider, is the argument drawn from the question of our sincerity in the message delivered to the French minister at Basle, on the 8th of March; and a great variety of observations have been suggested and urged upon that point. One inference drawn by the right honourable gentleman, arises from the circumstance of this message having been communicated four months after his Majesty's speech, and three months after the declaration made to parliament, that his Majesty was ready to meet and give effect to any disposition manifested on the part of the enemy for the conclusion of a general peace. In the first place it must be remembered, that neither the speech from the throne, nor the declaration expressed any intention in the British government, to be the first in making proposals for opening a negotiation. The fair construction went no farther than to invite the enemy to make the first advances, if they were so disposed, and to shew that no obstacle would be opposed on our part to the capacity of the government they had chosen to negotiate terms with this country. Gentlemen, therefore, have no right to feel in any degree disappointed at the delay of the communication, since, in being the first to make any overtures of peace, his Majesty's ministers went beyond any pledge they had given, or any expectation that ought to be entertained.

It has further been objected, that those proposals must be insincere, because it did not appear that on this occasion we had acted in concert with our allies. A sufficient answer to this may be given by the peculiar circumstances of affairs, the lateness of the season, and those communications being cut off, by which we and our allies were before enabled to maintain a ready intercourse. Had this ceremony been complied with, the delay, which it would have occasioned, must unavoidably have been

greater than that of which gentlemen think themselves warranted to complain. They are, however, as much mistaken in their facts, as they are in their inferences, for this step was not taken without previous communication with our allies, and we acted in concert with them, though they were not formally made parties to the proposal; a ceremony which in my opinion would be wholly superfluous.

Another proof, it should seem, of our insincerity is, that, in the message alluded to, we did not recognize the republic. It is truly generous in the right honourable gentleman, generous towards them at least, to find out an objection for the French which they themselves did not discover. We had the answer of the directory to our note, and they took not the least notice of the republic not having been recognized. If that had been a necessary and indispensable form, without which they considered themselves insulted, their natural conduct would have been to give no answer at all. On this point of recognition, however, the right honourable gentleman is always extremely tender, and has it very much at heart. He holds up the example of America to us, as if it was an instance that had any application to the present question. The right honourable gentleman also boldly contends, that if we had paid the French government this mark of respect and confidence, it would have induced them in return to propose more moderate terms. I am, however, very far from expecting any such effect; for, in fact, the government of France never seemed to think of it. I do not consider the omission as an act of hostility, and they must be aware, that the proposal to treat in itself implied a recognition, without which it was impossible that a treaty should be concluded.

To shew the consistency of the arguments on this subject, I shall take the liberty of recalling the attention of the house to those antecedent periods, when the gentleman on the opposite side of the house, in defending the French government, held up to our imitation the wise and temperate conduct of the court of Denmark, which maintained a beneficial neutrality



with France, and with which the latter shewed itself capable of maintaining the necessary relations of amity and peace. It is indeed true that France has in a great measure respected the neutrality of Denmark, and observed with it the relations of peace, at least, if not of amity. What, however, destroys the right honourable gentleman's argument at once is, that this wise, peaceable, neutral, and amicable court of Denmark had not recognized the French republic till the present year. So that, in fact, Denmark did not consider the French government as one that it ought to acknowledge, till the form which it assumed rendered it in some degree equally admissible in the eyes of the other powers of Europe.

Another argument of insincerity is, that we did not propose terms to the enemy, while we called upon them for theirs. This I conceive to be that which we had no right to do; the application did not come from the enemy, it was made on our part, and it would have been ridiculous to propose any particular terms to them, till we were previously informed whether they were willing to treat at all. It has also been alleged, that we must have been insincere, because when we employed the minister at Basle to make this application, we did not at the same time give him the power to negotiate. It was extraordinary indeed that an observation of this kind should be urged by any person who professed the slightest acquaintance with diplomatic proceedings. I would ask the right honourable gentleman whether it was ever known that the person, employed to sound the disposition of a belligerent party, was also considered as the proper minister for discussing all the relative interests, and concluding a treaty? The house must remember on former occasions, when the right honourable gentleman was so warm in the recommendation of a peace with France, whatever might be its government, that, apprehensive of an adherence to that etiquette, which might prevent us from being the first to make overtures, he advised us to make recourse to expedients, and sound the disposition of the enemy, through the medium of neutral powers. As soon as France adopted a



form of government, from which an expectation of stability was to be drawn, his Majesty's ministers readily waved all etiquette, and would not let such forms stand in the way of the permanent object of the peace and tranquillity of Europe, and they made direct proposals to the enemy. Had they, however, adopted the expedient proposed to them, and employed a neutral power to make their communications, was it to be expected that we should appoint that neutral power our minister plenipotentiary to manage our interests, as well as those of our allies? The gentleman through whom the communications were made at Basle, is one perfectly qualified from his talents, his zeal, and his integrity, to conduct any negotiation; but whatever may be his character, it would be the height of imprudence, or rather folly, to entrust the management of a negotiation of such uncommon moment to the discretion of an individual, and at such a distance.

The motives which induced his Majesty's ministers not to employ the same minister who had made the advances, as the negotiator of a peace, are not confined to what I have hitherto stated; it was also necessary in order to shew our allies that we did not go beyond the line of that arrangement which was concerted with them, and that, true to our engagements, we had no separate object, and would not proceed a step without their concurrence. We wished to avoid any thing which could excite the slightest suspicion, that we were disposed to a separate negotiation, which was what France would wish, and what was her uniform aim during the present contest. This was a policy which in some instances was too successful with some of our allies, and which enabled her to enforce on them successively more harsh and unequal conditions. It was with a view to the same open dealing, that it was thought proper to publish to the different courts of Europe the message and the answer, that the world might judge of the moderation of the allies and the arrogance of the enemy.

There was one ground of sincerity which I believe the right honourable gentleman did not state; but which the di-

rectory rested upon principally, in their answer. This was the proposal for holding a general congress. How this could support the charge of insincerity, I am at a loss to conceive. The British government pointed out the mode of pacification. This the enemy thought proper to decline and to reproach, but did not attempt to substitute any other mode by which the object was likely to be obtained. So far from projecting any thing which could even justly be an object of suspicion, ministers had preferred that of a congress, which was the only mode in which wars were concluded in all cases wherein allies were concerned, ever since the peace of Munster, the two last treaties only excepted. This charge of insincerity was represented by the right honourable gentleman as the probable cause of the exorbitant terms demanded by the enemy:—"They are high in their demands," says the right honourable gentleman, "because they know you are not in earnest; whereas, were they confident in your sincerity, they would be moderate and candid." In my humble apprehension, the extravagance of their terms leads to an opposite conclusion, and proves that the plea of insincerity is with them only a pretence. If they really thought his Majesty's ministers insincere, their policy would have been to make just and moderate demands, which, if rejected, would exhibit openly and in the face of the world, that want of candour, and that appetite for war, which the right honourable gentleman joins in so unjustly attributing to us. But having, in fact, no disposition for peace, and led away by false and aspiring notions of aggrandizement, the government of France offered us such terms as they knew could not possibly be complied with. Did they know the spirit, temper, and character of this country, when they presumed to make such arrogant proposals? These proposals I will leave to the silent sense impressed by them in the breast of every Englishman. I am, thank God! addressing myself to Britons, who are acquainted with the presumption of the enemy, and who, conscious of their resources, impelled by their native spirit, and valuing the national character, will prefer the chances and



alternatives of war to such unjust, unequal, and humiliating conditions.

The plea of the French directory, that their constitution did not permit them to accept of any terms, which should diminish the extent of country annexed by conquest to the territories of the republic, the right honourable gentleman himself very fairly condemns; because, if persevered in, it must be an eternal obstacle to the conclusion of any peace. That the interests of foreign nations should yield to those laws, which another country should think proper to prescribe to itself, is a fallacy, a monster in politics, that never before was heard of. Whether their military successes are likely to enable them to preserve a constitution so framed, I will not now inquire, but of this I am certain, that the fortune of war must be tried before the nations of Europe will submit to such pretences.

On a fair examination, however, will it appear, that the right honourable gentleman is right in observing, that this allegation could be no more than a pretext? If so, is it not singular that the right honourable gentleman, who seems so shocked at this pretext of the law of the French constitution, should direct none of his censure against the legislators, or government of that nation, but vent all his indignation on the British ministers, for deferring their proposals for peace, till the enemy had formed such a constitution as rendered peace impracticable? I will not now recount all those arguments which, on former occasions, I have so frequently submitted to the house, nor the motives which induced me to decline all proposals for peace, till some form of government was established, which had a chance of being stable and permanent. Surely, however, it is too great a task imposed upon me to be able to foresee, amongst the innumerable and varying constitutional projects of the French, the precise system on which they would fix at last. Much less could I foresee that they would have adopted a constitution which even the right honourable gentleman himself would be induced to condemn. But, having so condemned it, he should in justice have



transferred his censures to those by whom it was framed; instead of which, all the thunder of the right honourable gentleman's eloquence is spent at home upon the innocent, while the guilty at a distance are not disturbed even by the report.

However the spirit of this country may be roused, and its indignation excited, by the exorbitant conditions proposed to it by the enemy, yet even these extravagant pretensions should not induce us to act under the influence of passion. I could easily have anticipated that unanimity of sentiment, with which such degrading proposals have been rejected by every man in this country, but our resentment, or our scorn, must not for a moment suffer us to lose sight of our moderation and our temper. We have long been in the habit of waiting for the return of reason in our deluded enemy, and whenever they shall descend from those aspiring and inadmissible projects which they seem to have formed, and are proceeding to act upon, we shall still be ready to treat with them upon fair and honourable terms. We are particularly interested in urging them to the acceptance of such a constitution as may be best suited to their character and situation, but we must take care that their constitution shall not operate injuriously to ourselves. We do not shut the door against negociation whenever it can be fairly entered upon, but the enemy, so far from meeting us, say plainly they cannot listen to any terms, but such as in honour we cannot accept. The terms of peace which the right honourable gentleman pointed at, and which, after all, he considers as very disadvantageous, are, that the French may retain their conquests in Europe, and that we should keep our acquisitions in the colonies. What however is the proposal of the directory? No less than this: that every thing should be restored to them, and they in return are to give up nothing. It is also urged by the honourable gentleman, that we were to blame in so abruptly breaking off the negociation, and communicating the result to the world, together with the observations made upon it. To this I will answer, that the terms proposed by the enemy cut

short all further treaty; and as to the communication of the result, it will have, at least, the important consequence of dividing the opinions of France, and uniting those of England.

The motion was rejected;

Ayes ..... 45

Noes ..... 207

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October 6, 1796.

DEBATE on the address of thanks to his Majesty for his most gracious speech \* on opening the session.

MR. PITT: —

Although I feel myself impelled Sir, from more than one consideration to come forward on the present occasion, I shall not be under the necessity of troubling the house much at length. It is certainly to me matter of great satisfaction, that

\* *“ My Lords and Gentlemen,*

*“ It is a peculiar satisfaction to me, in the present conjuncture of affairs, to recur to your advice, after the recent opportunity which has been given for collecting the sense of my people, engaged in a difficult and arduous contest, for the preservation of all that is most dear to us.*

*“ I have omitted no endeavours for setting on foot negotiations to restore peace to Europe, and to secure for the future the general tranquillity.—The steps which I have taken for this purpose have at length opened the way to an immediate and direct negotiation, the issue of which must either produce the desirable end of a just, honourable, and solid peace for us, and for our allies, or must prove, beyond dispute, to what cause alone the prolongation of the calamities of war must be ascribed.*

*“ I shall immediately send a person to Paris with full powers to treat for this object, and it is my anxious wish that this measure may lead to the restoration of general peace: but you must be sensible that nothing can so much contribute to give effect to this desire, as your manifesting that we possess both the determination and the resources to oppose, with increased activity and energy, the further efforts with which we may have to contend.*



at so critical a conjuncture, indeed the most critical and the most important that has occurred during the present century, that on the only great and substantial question, on which the address proposes to express any opinion, there should be no

“ You will feel this peculiarly necessary at a moment when the enemy has openly manifested the intention of attempting a descent on these kingdoms.— It cannot be doubted what would be the issue of such an enterprize; but it befits your wisdom to neglect no precautions that may either preclude the attempt or secure the speediest means of turning it to the confusion and ruin of the enemy.

“ In reviewing the events of the year, you will have observed that, by the skill and exertions of my navy, our extensive and increasing commerce has been protected to a degree almost beyond example, and the fleets of the enemy have, for the greatest part of the year, been blocked up in their own ports.

“ The operations in the East and West Indies have been highly honourable to the British arms, and productive of great national advantage; and the valour and good conduct of my forces, both by sea and land, have been eminently conspicuous.

“ The fortune of war on the continent has been more various, and the progress of the French armies threatened, at one period, the utmost danger to all Europe; but from the honourable and dignified perseverance of my ally the Emperor, and from the intrepidity, discipline, and invincible spirit of the Austrian forces, under the auspicious conduct of the Archduke Charles, such a turn has lately been given to the course of the war, as may inspire a well-grounded confidence that the final result of the campaign will prove more disastrous to the enemy than its commencement and progress for a time were favourable to their hopes.

“ The apparently hostile dispositions and conduct of the court of Madrid have led to discussions, of which I am not yet enabled to acquaint you with the final result; but I am confident that whatever may be their issue, I shall have given to Europe a further proof of my moderation and forbearance; and I can have no doubt of your determination to defend, against every aggression, the dignity, rights, and interests of the British empire.

“ *Gentlemen of the House of Commons,*

“ I rely on your zeal and public spirit for such supplies as you may think necessary for the service of the year. It is a great satisfaction to me to observe that, notwithstanding the temporary embarrassments which have been experienced, the state of the commerce, manufactures, and revenue



difference of sentiment in this house, and that even the right honourable gentleman \* should have expressed his cordial concurrence. There are indeed many topics on which he touched in the course of his speech, in which I now differ with him as much as ever I differed at any former period; but, with respect to the great and substantial object of the address, the propriety of the conduct employed to bring about a solid and durable peace, such a peace as may be consistent with the permanent security and the just pretensions of the country, there does not subsist even the slightest shade of difference. That object is found to command the most full and most unequivocal support. Such a circumstance I must indeed consider as matter of just pride and of honest satisfaction. It exhibits the most decided and undeniable proof that the steps which his Majesty has taken towards negotiation, that the clear and explicit declaration that he has made, are in themselves so unexceptionable, and so well calculated of the country, proves the real extent and solidity of our resources, and furnishes you such means as must be equal to any exertions which the present crisis may require.

*“ My Lords and Gentlemen,*

“ The distresses which were in the last year experienced from the scarcity of corn are now, by the blessing of God, happily removed, and an abundant harvest affords the pleasing prospect of relief in that important article to the labouring classes of the community.—Our internal tranquillity has also continued undisturbed:—the general attachment of my people to the British constitution has appeared on every occasion, and the endeavours of those who wished to introduce anarchy and confusion into this country, have been repressed by the energy and wisdom of the laws.

“ To defeat all the designs of our enemies, to restore to my people the blessings of a secure and honourable peace, to maintain inviolate their religion, laws, and liberty, and to deliver down unimpaired to the latest posterity, the glory and happiness of these kingdoms, is the constant wish of my heart, and the uniform end of all my actions.—In every measure that can conduce to these objects, I am confident of receiving the firm, zealous, and affectionate support of my parliament.”

\* Mr. Fox.

lated for the end in view, that they must command assent from any man who retains the smallest care for the interest and honour of his country. Impressed with this feeling of satisfaction, I can have but little inclination to detain the house on points of slighter difference. I look with still higher satisfaction to the concurrence now expressed in the object of the address, as the pledge of general unanimity, and the omen of great exertions, if, unfortunately, that object should not be obtained.

The honourable gentleman justly states, that what hitherto has been done, only amounts to an overture for peace. It is impossible to state what may be the result. We cannot pronounce what will be the disposition of the enemy, or what circumstances may occur to influence the fate of negotiation. We ought to look fairly to our situation. It holds out to us a chance of peace, if the enemy are disposed to accede to it on just and reasonable terms; but, on the other hand, if they are still actuated by ambitious projects, we shall gain another object by the course we have pursued; we shall unmask them in the eyes of Europe; we shall expose the injustice of their policy and their insatiable thirst of aggrandizement: and, if no other advantage be gained, we at least shall be able to put to the proof the sincerity of that pledge which this day has been given, that if the enemy are not disposed to accede to peace on just and reasonable terms, the war will be supported by the unanimous voice and the collected force of the nation. I trust and hope that it may not be necessary to have recourse to such a test of sincerity; but, while we indulge with satisfaction in the hope of a more favourable issue, we must at the same time look to the other alternative; we must be prepared with all the force of the country to support the prosecution of the contest, if its continuance should be found necessary. If the unanimity of this day be accompanied with such views, if it is not an unanimity founded merely upon the pleasing sound of peace, the captivating charm of renewed tranquillity, and the prospect of the termination of those scenes of horror and calamity with which



war is always attended (such an unanimity would indeed be fatal to the country), but if it is an unanimity the result of rational and manly reflection, founded upon a careful consideration of the situation of the country, and prepared to meet every conjuncture, it cannot then be too highly prized. We must not put out of view those means of exertion which we still possess; we must fairly compare the situation of this country with that of the enemy, and the amount of our own acquisitions with the losses of our allies; we must estimate the extent of the sacrifices which, under all these circumstances, it may be fitting for us to make, in order to effect the restoration of peace. It is with a view to these principles, that unanimity becomes so peculiarly desirable in the present moment. The clear and unequivocal explanation which his Majesty has given of his conduct, with respect to peace, has commanded a general concurrence. If it be that sentiment which, on the one hand, is prepared to support the just pretensions and reasonable hopes of the country, and on the other to resist the unjustifiable demands and arrogant claims of the enemy, I shall then consider the unanimity of this day as the happiest æra in the history of the country. On this head I shall say no more, and agreeing thus far with the right honourable gentleman, I would wish to say as little as possible on the other points on which he touched in the course of his speech, and with respect to which we widely differ. They have been too often and too warmly discussed to be now forgotten by gentlemen who sat in the former parliament; and in the concluding part of his speech the right honourable gentleman gave us an assurance that we should hear of them again.

The right honourable gentleman has intimated as his opinion, that we must change the whole system of our interior policy, which he considers as inconsistent with the constitution of the country. I am happy, however, to find that he is so far satisfied with the constitution, as to ascribe to its protection that internal order and undisturbed tranquillity which he admitted that the country had for some time past enjoyed. He at the same time



reprobated in the severest terms laws which were passed during the last parliament, and which he represented as pregnant with the most mischievous consequences, and declared that he could not subscribe to any construction of that part of his Majesty's speech which included those among the laws, the energy and wisdom of which had contributed to secure the tranquillity of the country. Having made this declaration, it would be unfair and uncandid on my part not to be equally explicit. I desire no gentleman to vote for the address upon any such qualification with respect to those laws. I am firmly of opinion, that, exclusive of their influence, the peace of the country could not have been so successfully maintained, nor can I suffer the smallest reproach to fall upon the character of the last parliament, who displayed their wisdom and their energy in providing a remedy so suitable to the alarming nature of the crisis. If there is any ambiguity in the address, with respect to those laws, it is because they are so consistent with the spirit of the constitution which they were framed to protect, and so blended with the system of our jurisprudence, so congenial to the practice of former times, and so conformable even to the letter of former acts, that it was impossible to make any discrimination. It is to be recollected, that they were passed in a moment of alarm and turbulence; they had been found most admirably calculated to meet the emergency of the time. The address does not apportion with minute exactness what degree of tranquillity we have derived from the operation of those laws, when blended with the constitution, and what we might have enjoyed from the influence of laws previously subsisting; how much we were indebted for protection to the ancient strength of the edifice, or to those buttresses that were raised to support it in the moment of hurricane.

There were some other points on which the right honourable gentleman touched. He seemed to consider, from the language of the address, that endeavours have only been made of late to procure peace. He ought to recollect that his Majesty's speech particularly refers to what has taken place since he last commu-

nicated with his parliament. If ever the day shall come when an examination shall be instituted into the steps which have been adopted to secure the re-establishment of the general tranquillity, I am confident that no endeavours for that purpose will be found to have been wanting on the part of his Majesty's ministers. But gentlemen must be sensible, that what may be admitted as an endeavour to restore peace depends upon a variety of circumstances, and is likely to be differently appreciated by individuals of opposite sentiments. It depends on the relative state of parties, on the number of allies with whom we may be engaged to act, on the degree of attention we pay to their interests, and on the concert we wish to preserve with them. Taking all these necessary considerations into view, I again pledge myself that it will be found in the result of inquiry, that ministers have neglected no opportunity which could have been improved for the purpose of accelerating peace. But the right honourable gentleman has told us, that we are at last come to the period which he had all along pointed out; that we have now consented to adopt that course which he has uniformly recommended since the commencement of the contest—to send a person to Paris, and to try the effect of negotiation. He takes to himself all the merit of that policy which we have tardily adopted, and so confident did he feel himself in this ground of self-exultation, that he declined all illustration of his victory, and merely made it the subject of one triumphant observation. His assertion was, “you are now taking those measures which, if you had listened to my counsels, you might have adopted four years ago.” But does it follow that the measure was right then, because it is right now? May not a period of four years produce many events to justify a material change of policy, and to render measures wise and expedient, which at a certain time would neither have been prudent nor seasonable? Because you do not choose to make peace the day after an unprovoked aggression, may you not be justified in holding out pacific overtures after a lapse of four years? The argument of the right honour-



able gentleman amounts to this, that either you must make peace the day after the aggression, or not make it at all.

With respect to the relative situation of this country and Spain, it would not be consistent with my duty to go into any detail on that subject at the present moment.

As to the question of our resources, the right honourable gentleman admits them to be extensive and flourishing. They furnish, indeed, in a moment like the present, a subject of peculiar congratulation and well-grounded confidence. If the revenue, after a four years war, which might have been expected to have injured it so materially in so many branches, and after all the additional burthens which have been imposed, still keeps up to the rate at which it was stated last year, that circumstance is surely no slight source of satisfaction. With respect to the state of commerce, I am enabled to speak in a very different strain. Notwithstanding all the embarrassments which it has had to encounter, it has attained and still continues to enjoy a pitch of unexampled prosperity. Those embarrassments have proceeded from various causes;—the expense of the war abroad, and the high price of articles of consumption at home; the situation of part of the continent, where the markets have been shut against us; and even the growth of our capital re-acting upon the commerce which occasioned it, so that what was an unequivocal symptom of prosperity, was itself a cause of temporary distress. Of the continuance of this prosperity, we have now the best assurance. The state of our exports during the last six months has been equal to what they were in the most flourishing year of peace, 1792; and our foreign trade has even exceeded the produce of that year, which was the most productive of any in the history of this country. Under these circumstances, whatever temporary embarrassments may have arisen from the quantity of specie sent out of the country, from the want of a sufficient circulating medium, from the state of foreign markets, and from the increase of our capital; and however these difficulties may for a time have obstructed the ordinary operations of fi-



nance, the commercial character of the country has lost neither its vigour nor importance. If such has been the state of things, at a period when the country has had to contend for every thing dear to it; if, notwithstanding all the obstacles which have clogged the machinery, the spring has retained so much force and energy, we may presume, that, if by the obstinacy and ambition of the enemy we should be called to still greater exertions, our resources as yet remain untouched, and that we shall be able to bring them into action with a degree of concert and effect worthy of the character of the British nation, and of the cause in which they will be employed. These resources have in them nothing hollow or delusive. They are the result of an accumulated capital, of gradually increasing commerce, of high and established credit. They are the fruits of fair exertion, of laudable ingenuity, of successful industry; they have been produced under a system of order and of justice, while we, under many disadvantages, have been contending against a country which exhibits in every respect the reverse of the picture;—a proof that the regular operation of those principles must triumph over the unnatural and exhausting efforts of violence and extortion. By these resources we are now qualified to take such steps as may tend to conduct us to a solid and a durable peace; or, if we do not succeed in that object, to prosecute the contest with firmness and confidence.

The right honourable gentleman suggested one remark, that the speech contained no recognition of the government of France. He wasted a good deal of ingenuity in attempting to prove that it ought to have contained an express acknowledgment of the French government. It ought to have occurred to him that a passport having been sent for and granted, some communication must have taken place on that occasion, and as the executive directory had been satisfied with the form of communication, and the mode in which they had been addressed, it could not be necessary for him to start a difficulty where they had found none. I can assure him, on the part of British ministers, that no question of etiquette, no difficulty of form originating from them,

shall be permitted to stand in the way of negociation, or to obstruct the attainment of the great object of peace.

As to the other points, the right honourable gentleman has suggested what lessons we ought to derive from the experience of adversity. These lessons may be greatly varied according to the situation of parties and the different points of view in which the subject is considered. But, when the right honourable gentleman tells us that the situation of this country is that of adversity, I can by no means agree to the proposition. How far it deserves to be ranked under that description, let those pronounce who are best acquainted with the state of our resources. It cannot surely be termed a state of adversity from any losses of our trade, the diminution of our capital, or from the reduction of any of our foreign possessions. We have not been greatly impoverished by the events of the war in the East and West Indies. We cannot be much weakened in our national strength, even upon the statement of the right honourable gentleman, by having our navy, in consequence of repeated triumphs over every hostile squadron, raised to a greater degree of glory and of fame than it had ever before attained. Where then, are we to look for the symptoms of this adversity? Are we to look for them in the losses and disasters of our allies? But, does the right honourable gentleman appeal to these as a criterion of adversity, when in the same breath I hear him hold out as a source of complaint, that you are not, under your present circumstances, sure of a triumphant peace? And why can you not command such a peace?—because you will not separate your own greatness, and your own commerce, from the interest and from the fate of your allies; because you refuse to purchase peace for yourselves on any other terms than those which will secure the tranquillity of Europe, and consider the situation of Great Britain as chained to that of the continent, by the bonds of a liberal and comprehensive policy. If what has been lost on the continent is a subject of regret, it is at least a topic on which we have no reason to reproach ourselves. If even the prospect in that quarter continued as gloomy as it was some time since, and if



the extremity had not roused the armies of the emperor to those gallant and spirited exertions which have been crowned with such brilliant and unprecedented success, no share of blame could attach to us. While the violence of France has been over-running so great a part of Europe, and every where carrying desolation in its progress, your naval exertions have enabled you to counterbalance their successes, by acquisitions in different parts of the globe, and to pave the way for the restoration of peace to your allies, on terms which their own strength might have been unable to procure. If you look indeed to the geographical situation of the seat of war, the emperor has not regained by his recent victories all that he had formerly lost. But do you count for nothing the destruction and ruin of those armies, by whom all the previous successes of the enemy had been achieved? Do you count for nothing the glorious and immortal testimony that has been exhibited to mankind, that disciplined valour must finally triumph over those principles that the war was undertaken to oppose, and which owed all their extraordinary and unaccountable successes to the violence in which they originated, and the excesses with which they were accompanied? A memorable warning has also been afforded with respect to the true consequences which have resulted to those foreign powers, who, in opposition to their true interests, have courted the alliance of that enemy, and expected to find security in disgraceful tranquillity. Recent events have served also to exculpate the characters of those who were calumniated as desirous to embrace their principles, and receive their laws, and in Germany they have left behind them nothing but the memory of their wrongs, and a feeling of eternal resentment. Are such effects to be considered as of small importance, or to be put in competition with the reduction of a fortress, or the possession of a district?

Of the virtues to be acquired in the school of adversity, the right honourable gentleman only mentioned those of moderation and forbearance. Moderation I should consider as that virtue which is best adapted to the dawn of prosperity: there are other



virtues of no less importance which are to be acquired under a reverse of fortune, and which are equally becoming in those who are called to suffer :—there are the virtues of adversity endured and adversity resisted ; of adversity encountered and adversity surmounted. The recent example of Germany has furnished an illustrious instance of fortitude and perseverance, and their fortitude and perseverance have had their merited reward. These are lessons which I trust this country has not to learn. England has never shewn itself deficient in firmness and magnanimity ; it is unrivalled in resource ; it has always been foremost in the career of honourable exertion, and it has only to maintain its accustomed vigour and perseverance, to effect the restoration of general tranquillity upon terms consistent with the dignity of its own character, and the security and interest of Europe.

The question upon the address was carried without a division.

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*October 18, 1796.*

THE House having resolved itself into a committee to consider of that part of his Majesty's speech, which respected invasion, and the paragraph being read as follows,

“ You will feel this peculiarly necessary at a moment when the enemy has openly manifested the intention of attempting a descent on these kingdoms. It cannot be doubted what would be the issue of such an enterprize ; but it befits your wisdom to neglect no precautions that may either preclude the attempt, or secure the speediest means of turning it to the confusion and ruin of the enemy ;” —

MR. PITT rose :

After the unanimous vote which the house gave upon the first day of the session, and their general occurrence in that part of the address which respects a foreign invasion, it would be doing injustice to the feelings which were then expressed, were I to make any apology for calling their attention to the sub-

ject on the present occasion. I shall not detain them therefore a single moment in shewing the propriety of laying before them at so early a period the measures which I mean this day to propose. It is equally our duty and our interest by every means in our power, and by every exertion of which we are capable, if possible, in the language of the address, to preclude the attempt, and at the same time to take such measures of defence as shall cause the invasion, if it should be attempted, to issue in the confusion and ruin of the enemy. I shall not at present go much at large into the detail of preparations, but merely suggest a general outline of defence, which, if it should be approved of by the committee, may be particularly discussed when the bills are afterwards brought in upon the resolutions. The general considerations are few and obvious. The natural defence of this kingdom, in case of invasion, is certainly its naval force. This presents a formidable barrier, in whatever point the enemy may direct their attack. In this department, however, little now remains to be done, our fleet at this moment being more respectable and more formidable than ever it was at any other period in the history of the country. But strong and powerful even as it at present is, it is capable of considerable increase, could an additional supply of seamen, or even landsmen, who in a very short time might be trained to an adequate knowledge of the naval service, be procured. For this purpose I would suggest a levy upon the different parishes throughout the kingdom—an expedient precisely similar to that which was practised with so much success nearly two years ago. This levy, however, I would not confine as a mode of supply for the sea service. It is certainly of the highest importance both for the internal defence of the country and the security of our foreign possessions, that all the old regiments should be complete. But every one must be sensible, that from the numbers in those regiments who have fallen a sacrifice to sickness and the fortune of war, a more expeditious method must be adopted for their completion, than the ordinary mode of recruiting supplies, in order that the country may be able to avail



itself of this arm of strength. I would propose, therefore, in the first place, a levy of fifteen thousand men from the different parishes for the sea service, and for recruiting the regiments of the line. The committee, however, must be sensible when a plan of invasion is in agitation—a scheme, which almost at another time would not have been conceived, and an attempt, which, by any other enemy than that with whom we have now to contend, might have been justly deemed impracticable—that a more enlarged and a more expensive plan of prevention and of defence is necessary.

In digesting this plan there are two considerations of which we ought not to lose sight. The first is the means (which must not be altogether new) of calling together a land force, sufficiently strong to frustrate the attempt, keeping our naval force entirely out of view; and secondly, to adopt such measures in raising this force as shall not materially interfere with the industry, the agriculture and the commerce of the country. It will be for the house to decide upon the degree to which the former consideration ought to be permitted to interfere with the latter. A primary object will be to raise, and gradually to train, such a force as may in a short time be fit for service. Of all the modes of attaining this object, there is none so expeditious, so effectual, and attended with so little expense, as that of raising a supplemental levy of militia, to be grafted upon the present establishment. I should propose that this supplement shall consist of sixty thousand men, not to be immediately called out, but to be enrolled, officered and gradually trained, so as to be fit for service at a time of danger. The best mode of training them without withdrawing too many at one time from their regular pursuits, will be to embody one-sixth part in regular succession, each to be trained for twenty days, in the course of which they may become tolerable proficient in the military exercise. With respect to the mode of conducting the levy, the returns that have been lately made from the different counties shew the present levies to be extremely disproportioned, and that the clause in the act which



provides against this abuse has never been executed. Accordingly we find that in some counties the proportion is one out of seven, and in others one out of three. It will be expedient therefore to regulate the future levy, not by the proportions now existing, but by a general estimate of the inhabitants who are able to bear arms.

The next consideration which merits attention, is the manner in which the troops are to be furnished, which I think ought to be generally from all parts of the kingdom, and that an obligation be imposed upon those who are balloted, either to serve in person, or to provide a substitute; and the better to preserve the general proportion, that this substitute be provided either from the parish in which the person balloted resides, or from a parish immediately adjoining. It will be proper also to remove the present exemption from those who have more than one child, on the express condition that they shall not be called upon to serve out of the parish in which they live. The mode of training only one-sixth part of the whole, twenty days in succession, as it will only withdraw ten thousand at a time from their usual occupations, consequently will not much infringe upon the general order of the community. Of course they must be provided with some sort of uniform, but it will be of the coarsest kind, and such as may be purchased at a small expense. A sufficient number of arms will also be in readiness for supplying each man in the moment of danger.

Another measure which I would suggest to the committee, is to provide a considerable force of irregular cavalry. The regular cavalry on the present establishment is certainly by no means inconsiderable, and the yeomanry cavalry, which from their numbers are sufficiently respectable, we have found to be highly useful in securing the quiet and maintaining the internal tranquillity of the country. But with a view to repelling an invasion, the more that this species of force is extended, the greater advantage is likely to accrue from it, as an invading enemy, who must be destitute of horses, can have no means to

meet it upon equal terms. Besides, it is a species of force which may be provided in a mode that will be attended with almost no expense to the public, and with little hardship to individuals. In order to calculate the extent to which these irregular cavalry may be raised, it is necessary to estimate the number of horses which are kept for pleasure throughout the kingdom, and by raising the levy in this proportion we shall have the satisfaction to think that it will fall upon those only who have a considerable stake to defend. By the produce of the tax, which is as good a criterion as any, of the number of horses kept for pleasure, we find that in Scotland, England and Wales, they amount to about two hundred thousand, one hundred and twenty thousand of which belong to persons who keep only one horse of the kind, the rest to persons, some of whom keep ten, and various other proportions. It certainly would not be a very severe regulation when compared with the object meant to be accomplished, to require one-tenth of these horses for the public service. I would therefore propose that every person who keeps ten horses, shall be obliged to furnish one horse and a horseman to serve in a corps of cavalry;—that every person who keeps more than ten horses, and a number falling short of twenty, after furnishing a horse and horseman, for the first ten, shall subscribe a proportionate sum for the rest, which shall be applied to defray the general expense;—that those who keep twenty shall furnish two, three of thirty, &c. and that those who keep fewer than ten shall form themselves into a class, when it shall be decided by ballot, who at the common expense shall furnish the horse and the horseman. These troops thus raised will be provided with uniform and accoutrements, formed into corps, and put under proper officers. And surely when the means are compared with the object to be attained and the expense to which individuals will be subjected, with the security of the property which they possess, no one will complain that that end or that security is purchased at too dear a price.



There is still another resource which, though it may not appear so serious as those which have been already mentioned, ought not to be neglected. Upon the supposition of an invasion, it would certainly be of no small importance to form bodies of men, who, from their dexterity in using fire-arms, might be highly useful in harassing the operations of the enemy. The employment of such men for the purpose of defending the country, and harassing the enemy in case of an invasion, must be attended with the most serious and important consequences. Gentlemen will naturally guess that I am now alluding to that description of men called gamekeepers, and to others of the same class. I do most certainly allude to them, for there are many whose personal services would be of the utmost advantage. But I also, and more particularly, allude to those instances where gentlemen are gamekeepers for their own amusement, where they are gamekeepers merely for the satisfaction of being so, not gamekeepers of necessity but of choice; in such cases there can be no hardship in obliging those gentlemen, if we cannot have their personal services, at least to find a substitute, who may be as well calculated to defend the country as themselves. I do therefore propose, that those persons who shall have taken out licences to shoot game, or deputations for gamekeepers, shall, within a certain period, be at liberty to return the same if they think proper; but if after that period they shall continue their licences or deputations for gamekeepers, then they shall be obliged to find substitutes. I observe gentlemen smiling at the idea of raising a force by such means, but that smile will be converted into surprise, when they hear that the number of persons who have taken out those licences, are no fewer than 7000. Such a plan cannot be considered as a means of internal defence likely to be approved of by every person in the country.

I have stated to the committee the general outline of the bill. I shall defer saying much more on the subject; it will be more satisfactory to speak particularly when the resolution is



reported to the house, than to enter into any further detail at this moment. The number of cavalry which I propose to raise in the manner I have mentioned will be 20,000; but with respect to whether there must not be some other additional mode adopted, it is impossible to say exactly, from not being able to ascertain with certainty how many persons it may be necessary to exempt, on account of their being in orders, or for other reasons. Thus have I pointed out the means by which I propose to raise 15,000 men, to be divided between the sea and the land service, to raise the supplemental levy of 60,000 for the militia, of which one-sixth part is to be forthwith called out to exercise; to raise 20,000 men by means of persons taking out the licences to shoot game and keep gamekeepers, or on such other persons as may hereafter be deemed necessary. If the propositions I have mentioned should be approved, I should wish the resolutions to be printed, and if immediately, to introduce the bill, to carry it on to a committee, and to fill up the blanks, and then to allow an interval of a week for its discussion. I mention this in order that more time should not be taken up than is absolutely necessary for the due examination of the principles of the bill; since, gentlemen, you cannot but recollect, when you are once satisfied, and have determined upon the propriety of any particular measure, every day, every hour of delay, is attended with additional danger.

I shall now move that the chairman be directed to report to the house, "That it is the opinion of the committee, that a bill should be brought in for raising a certain number of men in the several counties of England, and the several counties, burghs, and stewartries of Scotland, for the service of his Majesty."

A discussion of some length succeeded, in which Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Dundas, and Mr. Fox, severally delivered their sentiments upon the proposed measure.

Mr. Pitt spoke in reply:

After what has already been said by my right honourable friend\*, I entertain some doubts whether I ought to detain the committee one moment from the unanimous vote which I believe will be given upon the present occasion. I am sure, at least, that it will not be necessary to consume much of your time by replying at length to the short observations of the honourable gentleman†, or to the more detailed remarks in which he has been followed by the right honourable gentleman‡, upon the same side, as I cannot but regard the declaration with which they prefaced and concluded their animadversions, that they did not mean to oppose the resolutions which I had the honour to propose, as a sufficient answer to the arguments by which it was accompanied. If the right honourable gentleman feels that the declarations of ministers upon the subject which constitutes the foundation of the present deliberations, are not sufficient to justify the measures which are to be grounded upon it; if he considers their assurances or their representations entitled to no confidence; if he is persuaded that there exists no danger of invasion, against which it is intended to provide; if he is convinced that the objects of the preparations that are to be made, are destined to carry on other war-like operations than the plan avows, or are employed as pretexts to cover designs of ambition or of encroachment at home; if he believes that they are intended to prosecute that object of the war which he thinks proper to describe as unjust and diabolical, I would ask, how he can reconcile these principles with the conduct he is to pursue; or, as a public man, upon what public ground he can rest that assent which he has bestowed upon the measures which have been suggested? But while the right honourable gentleman indulged in these animadversions, he knew well that the precautions were demanded by the country as measures of self-defence, from which he could not withhold his concurrence. He demonstrated by his actions, that he was in reality sensible that the present was

\* Mr. Dundas.

† Mr. Sheridan.

‡ Mr. Fox.



not like other wars, undertaken to maintain a point of national honour, or to defend a disputed interest;—to support an ally that was attacked, or to guard remote or doubtful dangers; but that it was the first war in which a great and free people, in the prosecution of their commerce and the enjoyment of their prosperity, were called upon for a time to defend the sources from which they flowed, and, in compliance with the good faith which was due to their allies, and urged by a sense of common danger, found themselves compelled to oppose unprovoked aggression, and resist principles hostile to the government and constitution of these kingdoms and to every regular government in Europe. Why did not the right honourable gentleman follow up his principles, by opposing likewise the measures which were proposed to meet this danger, but because he believed that the situation of affairs is such as to require these precautions; and because he must know that a false security could alone present the smallest chance of success in the attempt which has been threatened; because also he knew that such was the character of the enemy with whom we had to contend, that they were not so liable to be deterred by the desperate nature of the enterprise, or by a consideration of the number of persons whom its ruin might devote to destruction? Such, I am convinced, were the feelings of the right honourable gentleman upon this occasion, and such are the considerations by which his conduct is explained, although, perhaps, he found it necessary to colour his assent, and to disguise his conviction, by the invectives he introduced against the last parliament, and against the conduct of administration. Though, however, he reprobated the system and the measures of administration, though he accused the justice and vilified the character of the former parliament, he could not trust the natural conclusion of his own premises. He did not ask if any of the new members, who had so lately come up impregnated with the sense of their electors, or if the old members, who were witnesses of the proceedings, and whose recollection of the last



parliament was so recent, would agree with him in the character which he had ascribed to it. Nor did he venture to make any appeal to ascertain who were those who would concur with him in asserting the principles he had professed. While I reflect upon these circumstances, I feel confident that it will not be incumbent upon me to answer at much length the arguments of the honourable gentlemen on the other side of the house, especially when the objections of the one are answered by the observations adduced by the other.

While the right honourable gentleman\* professed to agree with every sentiment of his honourable friend†, they materially overthrew each other's reasonings, and every sentence uttered by the right honourable gentleman was confuted by that which preceded it. The internal order of battle seems to have been completely deranged, and the arguments of the honourable gentlemen themselves meet in hostile encounter. The honourable gentleman † wished to impose upon ministers a responsibility for the measures which were founded upon the assertion in his Majesty's speech, because, continued he, this matter rests only upon the information of the speech from the throne, which I must consider as the speech of ministers; and in order to supply the defect of this responsibility which attaches to ministers by the most solemn and formal declaration, the honourable gentleman insists upon receiving satisfaction, and imposing responsibility by a communication less formal and less authentic! The right honourable gentleman\*, however, proceeded as if ministers were pleading on their responsibility, and then concluded by maintaining that there is no responsibility at all.

The right honourable gentleman is likewise offended with the general argument of the necessity of precaution, which was employed by my right honourable friend‡; but his honourable friend† beside him admits, that only general information was to be expected; so that to this argument the right honourable gentleman must lift up his hand and express his disapprobation, as he

\* Mr. Fox.

† Mr. Sheridan.

‡ Mr. Dundas.

professes that he cannot act upon general information. But why, says he, did not the danger, which you now apprehend, long before this induce you to demand the adoption of those measures of precaution which you now think it necessary to employ? No such plans, continued he, were pursued upon any former period. The right honourable gentleman too went out of his way to find comparisons to depreciate the characters of ministers, and asserted, that to such measures as the present much better ministers, in former wars, never had found it necessary to resort. He does not, however, mention who these much better ministers are; and if the right honourable gentleman recollects the language he employed during the seven last years of the American war, there was a time when he bestowed upon the conduct of that administration epithets as offensive, as *unjust* and *diabolical*. Why, exclaims the honourable gentleman, did you not call for these measures upon former occasions? Are we then gravely deliberating upon a great and important subject, and are we to be told that in certain given circumstances no precautions are to be taken because at a former period such measures were not required? May not the means which were judged adequate in a particular situation, be found insufficient when circumstances alter, or when danger is increased? The honourable gentlemen, though in other points their arguments were at variance, go on together contending that my right honourable friend had said, on a former occasion, that the force which this country possessed, was sufficient to repel the attacks of all Europe. Certainly I do not believe that my right honourable friend ever asserted, that in any possible case the volunteer corps would be sufficient for the defence of the country. If my right honourable friend had asserted that the spirit by which these volunteer associations were dictated, put in action as circumstances required, and accommodated to the pressure of danger, would be able to resist the efforts of the whole house of Bourbon, or of the republic of France, aided by any particular branch of the house of Bourbon, or of any other combination of powers—such an opinion I believe to be just,



and at least, perfectly consonant to the well-known firmness and zeal of my right honourable friend. But may not the relative situation of the enemy present them with more specific means of carrying their purpose into execution, than they possessed at a former period, when it was necessary to guard against the dangers which then threatened them from various quarters?

The right honourable gentleman says, you relied on the firmness and attachment of the people two years ago; and is it less now that you have recourse to extraordinary precautions? The attachment and loyalty of the people of this country, I trust, has experienced no diminution. It lives, and is cherished by that constitution which, notwithstanding the assertions of the right honourable gentleman, still remains entire. Under the protection and support which it derives from the acts passed by the last parliament, the constitution inspires the steady affection of the people, and is still felt to be worth defending with every drop of our blood. The voice of the country proclaims that it continues to deserve and to receive their support. Fortified by laws in perfect unison with its principles and with its practice, and fitted to the emergencies by which they were occasioned, it still possesses that just esteem and admiration of the people which will induce them faithfully to defend it against the designs of domestic foes, and the attempts of their foreign enemies. The right honourable gentleman discovers the extent of the adversity into which he represents the country to be fallen in some of the measures now proposed for its defence, and which he reprobates by the name of *requisitions*;—a species of levy, however, which so long as it was practised in France, he did not consider as deserving of any particular disapprobation. I will not at this moment inquire, whether requisitions in France were a right and proper measure; but let not the right honourable gentleman at once maintain that the attachment of the people renders these measures of defence superfluous, and in the next moment represent these precautions as proofs of the intolerable pitch of adversity to which the nation is reduced. The situation in which we



are placed does not imply a suspicion of our power, though it justifies our precautions. That prosperity is deceitful and dangerous, if it lead to a false security; that the danger, though groundlessly apprehended, or falsely exaggerated, without exertion upon our part, can alone be of doubtful issue or perilous consequence, is the real opinion which the contemplation of the state of the country is fitted to inspire.

The right honourable gentleman, when he expressed his dislike of the mode of pressing men for the public service, did not specifically apply his objection to the plan of augmenting the militia and raising the new supplies of cavalry; he admits that these may, in some measure, come under the description of personal force. The mode proposed of increasing the militia is not new in its principle. They are to be balloted in the same manner as the established militia of the country. The 60,000 men which it was proposed to add, were to be formed precisely as the 90,000 of which the ordinary number consists. The present addition does not exceed the amount for which, on former occasions, it was thought necessary to provide. In 1756, a bill passed for doubling the number. The right honourable gentleman, however, in pressing his argument, runs before his recollection. The 15,000 men for the land and sea service are to be raised according to the provisions of the act passed two years ago upon this subject. Does the right honourable gentleman then consider this to be pressing? No; it is meant to raise volunteers by contribution among the inhabitants of each parish, and, if they failed to produce the number at which they were rated, they were to pay a certain sum over the sum at which a person to serve could be procured. If the right honourable gentleman reprobates this mode as pressing, what was the language he held upon another occasion, and when a different mode was pursued? In 1794, when voluntary offers of service were introduced for the defence of the country, this mode was reprobated as repugnant to the constitution; and now when men are called upon to contribute their property and their personal service to the defence

of their country, it is discovered to be unjust, and stigmatized as requisition! The two honourable gentlemen admit the necessity of precaution, and they reprobate every measure which is proposed; and while they agree that it is necessary to provide for the defence of the state, they are dissatisfied with the means by which security is to be obtained. Notwithstanding the unanimity with which the resolution will be voted, I cannot augur well for the future co-operation which the measures may obtain, when I consider the sentiments which the honourable gentlemen entertain, and the observations with which their present concurrence is accompanied.

The resolution was afterwards put and agreed to.

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*December 7, 1796.*

THE House having resolved itself into a Committee of Ways and Means, Mr. Hobart in the chair,

MR. PITT rose and addressed the committee as follows :

The subject which I have now to lay before you is so extensive in its details, and of importance so evident and so striking, that I shall best gratify my own feelings, as well as best discharge my duty, by abstaining from all observations, which, though collateral to the subject of the day, would serve only to extend the consideration, and by proceeding, as expeditiously as possible, to state distinctly and shortly the resources which we may confidently rely on for the service of the year, and the amount of the expenses which we may have to incur.

Before I proceed to that most important part of the task of this day, to open to the committee a view of the general resources of the country, by which we may be able to provide for the necessary service of the year, and to shew them, that however great the demand may be, we are fully equal to the emergency, and prepared to meet it, it is my duty to state the amount of the supply, as it has been already voted, and that may be yet necessary to vote, for the service.



The committee will recollect that the vote for the ordinary of the Navy was for 120,000 seamen and marines . . . £. 6,240,000

To which add the amount of extraordinaries . . . . . 1,420,000

Making together the sum of . . . . . 7,660,000

But, that I may not leave any part of the service, much less this most valuable and favourite service, short; and that our exertions may be carried to the utmost possible length, I will take for the Navy the farther sum of . . . 2,500,000

Making altogether the service of the Navy for the year 1797, amount to . . . £. 10,160,000

The amount of the sums already voted for the Army is . . . . . £. 6,613,000

The account of the extraordinaries is not yet complete; but, as far as they can be made up with accuracy according to the account now presented, they appear to be of excess above the sum allowed last year . . . . . 4,300,000

Total of the Army . . . . . 10,913,000

The amount of the ordnance . . . . . 1,623,000

The miscellaneous services, including the sums given for the provision of the emigrant priests, and under all the usual heads . . . . . 378,000

Deficiency of land and malt . . . . . 350,000

Sum for the diminution of the national debt . . . 200,000

Surplus of grants in the year 1796, which ought to have come in aid of the service, amounting to 420,000*l.* will enable me to take the deficiency of the taxes at so much less; I shall take the deficiency of taxes at . . . . . 1,023,000



A vote of credit which I intend to move for, and which I shall afterwards explain, for . . . 3,000,000

Making the total of the supply for the year 1797 27,647,000

The first article of Ways and Means, is of course the land and malt . . . 2,750,000

The growing produce of the consolidated fund I shall take at a very small sum, the reasons of which I shall state afterwards . . . 1,075,00

Surplus of grants of the year 1796, and not applied in the year 1796 . . . 420,000

Profit on the lottery, after defraying the small sum which remains upon it, due to the loyalists, amounting to 80 or 100,000*l.*, I shall take at 200,000

The loan, the circumstances of which I shall afterwards explain . . . 18,000,000

Exchequer bills, which I propose to issue in a new manner, and which I shall afterwards explain and prove to be both practicable and expedient . . . 5,500,000

Total of Ways and Means £. 27,945,000

So that there is an excess of ways and means over the amount of the supply of 298,000*l.* I have stated the extent of what will be necessary for the supply of the year; but in order to anticipate, as far as human foresight can provide for, an expense so large, in circumstances so difficult, I shall endeavour to bring every thing distinctly before the committee. In the first place, I shall shortly state the terms of the loan, without comprehending all the singular combinations which have entered into this transaction, so creditable and glorious to the country. The new annual interest to be paid for the loan, as it stands at present, is subject to a great reduction, if the funds should rise on the event of a safe and permanent peace,—an event to which we have a right to look, and which this great display of national

zeal and spirit is calculated to accelerate ; yet I wish to view it as a permanent interest, and to consider it without the prospect of reduction. In that way the committee will see that the loan was made at the interest of only 5*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.* per cent. ; and I should not think myself justifiable if I were to provide a less sum than for the whole as a permanent annuity. It is also my intention to add the usual sum of one per cent. to the sinking fund, as if the loan was not to be paid off. In this view, taking the interest at 5*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.* and adding one per cent. on account of the sinking fund, the total interest on 18,000,000*l.* at 6*l.* 15*s.* per cent., would be 1,215,000*l.* I have proposed that we shall look to an issue of exchequer bills to the amount of 5,500,000*l.* as a fair and practicable means for the service of the year, and I do this because I am convinced that so many may be circulated both with economy and advantage. Other species of floating debt have been found to be extremely inconvenient and injurious, from the enormity of the discount to which they fell on account of the length of period they had to run. But exchequer bills were not subject to the same objection, though I should not think it wise to issue them even for the period of a twelvemonth. I think that it is an available means for the public until the instalments of the loan shall be made, to issue exchequer bills at short periods, say, at three months, which bearing an interest of a fraction above 5 per cent., would be certain of never falling to a discount, because they would be receivable in payment of the instalments of the loan. The interest is as near as possible to 5 per cent. to accommodate it in the usual way to a certain sum per diem. I am confident that no inconvenience will be suffered from keeping afloat this amount of exchequer bills, but that, on the contrary, it will be attended with advantage and accommodation to the public. If, at the end of the year, it should be found advisable to take them out of circulation, there will be no difficulty in the task. I propose to provide interest at five per cent. on the amount of these exchequer bills, which will be 275,000*l.*

It is my wish to look to every object for which we have to pro-



vide in the course of the year ; with this view we must look to the amount of interest to be provided for the navy debt beyond the amount of the former votes.

The total excess of the Navy Debt beyond estimate

of 1796, is . . . . . £. 8,250,000

Of this sum there was provided for . . . . . 4,000,000

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There remained therefore to be provided, interest for 4,250,000

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I shall by-and-by state to the committee the grounds of the computation that I made, and of the reasons why it has so far exceeded the estimate that I made, and I trust that I shall do it to their satisfaction. It ought to teach us to look forward to the probable addition that may be required for the service of the present year, and to provide largely against unforeseen circumstances. In this view, having already taken 2,500,000*l.* in the estimate of supply, I am confident that I shall cover every possible demand under the head of navy debt, if I provide interest for 3,000,000*l.* more.

There is only one other article to be added to the above, and which at the same time ought not to be taken into the estimate of the expense of the year. The committee will recollect that one of the taxes of the last session was, in its passage through parliament, found to be so complicated, that it was expedient to give it up, viz. the tax on collateral succession. It was taken for the sum of 140,000*l.* and not having, as it was my intention to do, provided another tax in its room, it is now my duty to make up for that deficiency; but of course this is not a sum to be taken as any part of the expense of the current year.

The total of the annuity to be raised by new bur-

dens on the people for these distinct heads

therefore is . . . . . £. 2,222,000

But from this amount I have to deduct the sum

which the East-India Company have engaged to

pay, namely, interest on 2,000,000*l.* of the



above loan for four years; I have to deduct  
therefore . . . . . 112,000

Making the sum to be raised by annual taxes . . . £. 2,110,000

I should not think that I had attained my object by the engagement of the India company to advance this for four years, though undoubtedly it is a very handsome sum, if afterwards it was to be left afloat, and might come to be provided for at that period. But I have recent information that it is to be recommended to the court of directors, and by them to the general court, that the company shall undertake to pay this sum annually during the remainder of their existing charter. They certainly cannot undertake more liberally, and it is a handsome and becoming return on their part for the protection which they received from the country in the moment of their pressure, that they thus come forward to contribute so liberally to the public service.

My next duty is to enumerate the particulars of the taxes by which it is proposed to defray the heavy burden which it becomes necessary to impose, in order to meet the exigency of our situation. This is a painful, but at the same time indispensable part of my duty; and I trust that we shall not shrink from performing this duty in its full extent, from any inconvenience which it may present, to our constituents, far less to ourselves; that we shall not fail to give a pledge to Europe that we have both spirit and resources to look our situation in the face, and to provide for every emergency which may arise in the present contest. While I talk thus, it is not because I feel the hardship on others to be small; on myself most assuredly I feel it to be great. Every additional burden which it is necessary to impose upon the country, is undoubtedly a new subject of regret. But at the same time it is with peculiar satisfaction I reflect, that the period at which I am now speaking is pregnant with a thousand circumstances, which at once proclaim the inexhaustible resources, and the unconquered spirit of the British nation. At such a period I may confidently come forward without disgui-

sing the burthens which the exigency of the crisis requires, and at the same time without affecting to treat them as light.—Light indeed they cannot be considered, except they be so represented in comparison with the immense importance of the objects of the contest, and in comparison with those unnatural and violent means which have been employed by the enemy, and have almost exhausted their resources. I should not do my duty if I did not propose such objects of taxation as may appear sufficient to meet the scale of expenditure for which it becomes necessary to provide. At the same time I am well aware that these objects will admit of much discussion, and that they cannot be fully considered or fairly examined, in the first instance. Their particular consideration must necessarily be the subject of future debate. I have therefore to deprecate all hasty objections, and to solicit from the candour of gentlemen, that they will, at least, forbear to cavil at any object of taxation which I may propose, unless they are confident that they are acquainted with and can propose a better substitute. Where taxes are to be raised to so considerable an amount, as in the present instance, it is impossible to provide adequate means, which will not be liable to much objection. But though it will be impossible to avoid particular objections, it seems upon the whole to be the most fair and unexceptionable principle of taxation, that the more generally the burdens are diffused, the more likely will they be to be equal. If we have seen the revenue of this country, even under circumstances the most unfavourable, so rapidly accumulated and drawn from such various channels, we may surely look with confidence to the capability of the country to bear those further burdens which will be required in the present moment. It has surely shewn a degree of energy, even more than sufficient to encounter all the difficulties of the crisis. If, after all the distresses of the last war, the burthens of which were at the time so severely felt, and which seemed almost to have exhausted the resources of the country, the revival of the revenue in the first years of peace was so rapid; if within a few years it has attained a state so flourishing; and if we, from the unfortunate



experience of some years of war, have been enabled to ascertain that it has now arrived at that degree of solidity and permanency, so as to leave the old sources of the national income untouched, and even shew itself equal to produce new, certainly we may look forward with confidence to prosperity beyond all estimate on the restoration of the blessings of peace. In the meantime the most equal principle of taxation will be to render the objects as diffuse as possible, and with this view I propose to select a few of the different branches of the existing revenue which seem best calculated for the purpose, in order to provide the additional taxes necessary for the service of the year.

The first branch of the revenue which I mean to propose to your attention is undoubtedly one of the most important, and which has appeared to me particularly eligible as a source of supply on the present occasion—I allude to that branch of revenue which has arisen from the excise. The taxes drawn from this quarter have in every instance been so successful as to give us confidence with respect to any new experiment which we may be induced to make. The first object which I mean to suggest is one which at different times has occupied the attention of the house, and occasioned considerable discussion—I mean the article of tea. Notwithstanding the additional duty lately imposed on this article, the sales of last year at the India house have considerably exceeded those of any former year, both in respect of quantity, and of quality and value. It is evident that the consumption is greatly increased, and is now universally prevalent. This circumstance pointed out the propriety of a small additional tax. From the extensive consumption of the article, this tax must be immensely diffused, and therefore can only be felt in a trifling degree by any individual. Small, however, as that proportion might be, it is still my intention that this tax shall in no degree be allowed to bear hard on the lower classes of the community. I mean, therefore, to exempt from the operation of this tax the whole of that coarser sort of tea, which I understand to be the common beverage of the poorer classes, and which at the India sales does not exceed two shillings per



pound. It may be urged that any additional tax on tea will have the effect to encourage smuggling. At the same time it may be remarked that the coarse species of tea, which is expressly exempted from the operation of the tax, is the most easily smuggled, the least liable to be damaged, and also the most likely to be an object of consumption among the lower classes, who inhabit the coast. This additional tax I propose to rate at 10 per cent. on the value of the article, and if we attend to the circumstances of the additional importation and the great increase of the sales, we may reasonably expect that the return will be amply productive. I am aware that at former periods it has been found expedient to adopt measures of an entirely different tendency, which at the time undoubtedly were highly beneficial. But, though we owe the benefit of the suppression of illicit trade to the low price to which tea was reduced by former proceedings of the legislature, it by no means follows that it is still necessary to continue the same policy. There is not the same danger to be apprehended from the attempts of smugglers after their capital has been withdrawn, their habits broken, and such regulations adopted, as must operate as an effectual bar to their future practices. If the return of peace tend to diminish the risk of smugglers, at the same time it will so reduce the charges of the India company as will enable them to lower their prices. Taking the additional duty on tea at the rate of 10 per cent. on the average of the sales of three years, it would amount to 240,000*l*.

An additional duty on sales by auction of two-pence halfpenny in the pound on sales of estates, and three-pence on all sales of furniture, goods and merchandize, will produce 40,000*l*.

An additional duty of 1*s*. per 1000 on all bricks made in Great Britain, I estimate at 36,000*l*.

There is another article, which I have to submit to the committee, which suggests nearly the same considerations as the additional duty on tea. One considerable duty has already been gained on this article, and the consumption is so pernicious, that with respect to this article no man could wish that there should

be any limits to the duty, so far as are consistent with the means of safely collecting it. So long as the consumption continues to a considerable extent, an addition to the duty must be considered as highly eligible in every view of policy and morals. I propose to raise the duty on spirits in the same proportion as before, viz. one penny on every gallon of wash, amounting to five-pence on every gallon of British spirits. The duty on foreign spirits will be advanced in the same proportion. The total amount on British and foreign spirits I estimate at the sum of 210,000*l*.

Another circumstance I have to mention, must be satisfactory, so far as it presents a new and eligible mode of supply, and yet must occasion no small degree of astonishment in the committee:—the circumstance to which I allude respects the state of the distilleries in Scotland. The mode of collecting the duty on spirits in that quarter has been by a duty on the contents of the still. The sum raised in this way, in the first instance, was so inconsiderable as not to deserve to be mentioned. By the last regulation it amounted to a sum of eighteen pounds, and had altogether produced a sum of one hundred thousand pounds. On calculating the amount of the quantity of spirits distilled in that country, still the duty was found very inadequate to that which subsisted on the same quantity in England. The disproportion is so very great, as ought not to be suffered to continue. I have had representations from the most respectable people in Scotland, suggesting, that either with a view to the morals of the people, or on fair grounds of policy, the present was a most eligible object of revenue. While a duty of eighteen pounds has been charged on the contents of a still through the rest of Scotland, only a sum of two pounds ten shillings has been charged on the same contents in the Highlands. The propriety of this exemption has been urged from various local considerations—the nature of the soil, the grain produced, &c. It may be proper to discuss, whether this exemption should be allowed to continue in its full extent? and whether the reasons which have formerly been urged, ought to be allowed the same weight in the



present moment? The smallest sum which I propose to lay on the stills through the rest of Scotland, is triple the present duty of eighteen pounds on the licence. Notwithstanding this increase, the duty will not be equal to the proportion of duties in England. The sum arising from this increased duty on the stills I estimate at 300,000*l*. Even if the effect should be to lessen the consumption of spirits, still the revenue will not suffer in any material degree. This diminution must occasion greater consumption of malt liquor, and in this way will equally contribute to promote the interests of the revenue, while it will have a much more beneficial tendency with respect to the health and morals of the people.

The next tax I mention with regret, because it will fall in some degree on the lower classes of the people, though it is one which, on the whole, seems to be a proper object of taxation. I mean an additional tax of 2*s*. 6*d*. on every hundred weight of sugar. This I calculate will amount to a sum of 280,000*l*.

On brimstone, bar iron, oil of olives, staves, I propose to lay an addition of ten per cent., amounting to 430,000*l*.; and on all other customs, wines, coals, and prize goods excepted, a new duty of five per cent., amounting to 110,000*l*.

The whole of these duties from the customs will amount to 466,000*l*.

A noble lord formerly imposed a duty on houses; taking the number of windows and the rent as the criterion of the sum to be paid. This last seemed to be a tolerably fair criterion of the different proportions which ought to be contributed by each individual, as it might in general be supposed that the rent and size of the house were regulated by the means of subsistence of the occupier. This, however, was in many cases a fallacious conclusion. In some instances in the country the extent of a house was found to be a disadvantage. The possession of an old large mansion-house, where it was accompanied with a small fortune, so far from subjecting the proprietor to additional taxes, ought rather to operate as an exemption. The value of houses of the



same size was to be estimated not so much according to their extent, as according to the circumstances with which they were connected, such as the number of servants kept, and the amount of other assessed taxes charged on the occupier. The most equitable mode, therefore, seemed to be to levy a tax in proportion to the other assessed taxes, as these might be supposed to bear a more certain proportion to the fortunes of the individuals. The number of servants, for instance, kept in a house, will in general correspond with the style of living and fortunes of the inhabitants. The sum arising from a tax levied in this way, I calculate will amount to 150,000*l*. and this, with an addition to the assessed taxes, I take at 290,000*l*.

The conveyance of articles, which, from the present advanced state of society, is put on so much better a footing, seems to be at present a fair object of taxation. It is, undoubtedly, but just that those articles should be made to contribute to the public service in return for that convenience and protection which they derive from the public. Letters in a particular manner come under this description. The increased facility with which they are transmitted to a distance, and the great convenience afforded to correspondence in consequence of recent improvements, may fairly allow that something should be added to the present rate of postage. The present rate of charging letters is first for one, two, or three stages; it then goes on to eighty miles, and from that to one hundred and fifty. This mode of charging by stages is very unequal, as one stage consists of more miles than another. I am therefore of opinion that it will be a more equitable mode to charge by miles than by stages; I also propose to adopt a new regulation with respect to gradations, and with respect to the bye and cross roads. These regulations, with an additional penny to be paid on each letter, will, according to the best calculation, amount to about 250,000*l*.

An additional duty on stage coaches will produce 60,000*l*.

The conveyance of parcels by stage coaches and other vehicles is also a fair object of taxation. I propose to subject them to a small stamp duty on booking them, which will afford additional security to the conveyance, and I estimate will produce 60,000*l*.

The only other tax which I have to propose is on a species of conveyance, which has also been much indebted to recent improvements—the conveyance by inland navigation. This accommodation to the trade and industry of the country, has owed much to the protection and patronage of the legislature. To it the proprietors have been indebted for the permission to employ their capital in a way so beneficial to themselves and the public. It is therefore but fair that while the extent of their improvements discovers their increasing opulence, the legislature should apply to this source of prosperity for assistance to the exigencies of the state. It is proposed to make a small addition to the tolls already charged on that navigation amounting to about one eighth. If an addition had been made to the tax on insurance against fire and water, and had been found fully to answer, surely those individuals who derived so much accommodation as well as a considerable saving from this new mode of conveyance, might, in return for the benefit they experienced, be called upon to contribute a small proportion to the exigencies of the state. As this eighth would be charged only on the existing tolls, all the exemptions which were now allowed, would still be permitted to hold good. The following is a recapitulation of the taxes.

EXCISE.

10 per cent. on teas . . . . .	£. 240,000
10 per cent. on coffee, &c. . . . .	30,000
Auctions . . . . .	40,000
Bricks . . . . .	36,000
Spirits . . . . .	210,000
Licences on Scots distillery . . . . .	300,000

Total of excise duties £ 856,000



Brought over . . . . .	£. 856,000
<b>CUSTOMS.</b>	
Sugar . . . . .	£. 280,000
Pepper . . . . .	10,000
10 per cent. on brimstone, iron, olive oil and staves . . . . .	43,000
5 per cent. on all other customs, prize goods, coals and wine excepted . . .	110,000
Other articles on import, such as starch, bricks, &c. . . . .	23,000
<b>Total of customs</b> . . . . .	<b>£. 466,000</b>
Assessed taxes, and new house tax . . . . .	296,000
Regulation of stamps . . . . .	30,000
Postage and regulation of post-office . . . . .	250,000
Stage coaches . . . . .	60,000
Stamp on parcels . . . . .	60,000
Canal navigation . . . . .	120,000
<b>Total amount of new taxes</b> . . . . .	<b>2,138,000</b>
<b>Amount of the annuity to be raised</b> . . . . .	<b>2,110,000</b>
<b>Excess of taxes</b> . . . . .	<b>£. 28,000</b>

Such are the sources from which I propose to draw the necessary sums to provide for the interest of the enormous expense of the year. I am not insensible that in several of these taxes I may have made an erroneous calculation, and have extended the estimate of the produce beyond what it may ultimately turn out to be; in this, however, I trust the committee will believe that I have been guided by the strictest regard to truth, and have taken the best criterion that was in my power, experience, for my guide. In those taxes which I could subject to that test, I have confidence in the accuracy of my statement; in those which are untried I have at least been moderate in my calculation. I am happy to say, that in looking at the resources of the country, we have a right to have confidence in



the full production of these duties. They are diffused over so many articles, that they will operate with equality, and yet will not bear hard on the classes of the poor. If we look at the production of the permanent taxes, we shall have no reason to believe that the war has materially injured the sources of our prosperity.

The permanent revenue for the year, ending 10th

October, 1796, amounted to . . . . . £ 14,012,003

And notwithstanding the operation of the new

duties and the influence of a state of war, the

average produce of those duties for the last

three years, was . . . . . 13,855,000

On the side of supply, I have taken but the sum of 3,000,000*l.* to meet the further extraordinaries for the year 1797, though the extraordinaries for the last year amounted to a much larger sum. There are two grounds for my not thinking it necessary to make a larger provision; there were many articles of charge in 1796, which will not recur in 1797. And secondly, there were several sums advanced which are likely to be repaid, and upon which we have a right to calculate. For instance, in the advances of 1796, made by commissioners upon oath to the merchants of Grenada, there is the sum of 900,000*l.* which we have a right to believe was advanced upon good security, and which will, no doubt, be speedily available to the public.

Another expense of a particular nature has been incurred in the interval of parliament. I allude to assistance which has been granted to the emperor, in order to enable him to carry on his military operations. That the expense of the country has been swelled by exertions which have been so gallantly supported, and have terminated so beneficially to the common cause, I think no man will regret. I am persuaded no man will be of opinion that we ought to have withheld from a brave and faithful ally the assistance necessary to preserve his inde-

pendence, and to restore him to glory. That assistance ministers thought proper to grant, not ignorant of the responsibility which they thereby incurred, not forgetting their own duty, nor fearful of the event. They reflected that in the critical situation of the country it might have been matter of extreme delicacy to have brought forward a public discussion on the propriety of advancing a sum to a foreign court; they were aware of the alarm which might have been excited by any proposition to send a quantity of specie out of the country. It is well known that a generally received opinion of the mischief which may be attendant on a measure is often productive of the reality. The consequence of discussion might have been to have suggested the grant of a sum too small for the wants of our ally, or too large for the means of the country. On that account ministers declined taking the opinion of parliament. They did not so far yield to their desire of aiding the emperor, as to step beyond the bounds of prudence, nor did they so tamely shrink from their own responsibility, as to withhold that assistance which they deemed to be essentially important for the common cause. A sum of about twelve hundred thousand pounds has, I believe, been allotted to his imperial majesty. A future opportunity will be afforded for the discussion of this particular topic, which it was not otherwise necessary for me to mention in the present instance, than because I was anxious that no circumstance connected with the national expenditure should be kept back on this occasion. I am convinced, that, to have withheld the assistance which has been granted, would have been to have sacrificed the best hope of this country for bringing the present contest to a fortunate issue. It is my intention, if this conduct is found to merit your approbation, humbly and earnestly to claim and solicit your confidence in continuing the same system. I cannot, for the reasons I have already mentioned, propose to you any specific sum to be granted to his imperial majesty: but, if you think proper to repose in ministers the same confidence in granting such occasional aid as they may see to be necessary, it shall,



on their part, be exercised with the same caution. I have therefore proposed a sum of three millions, chiefly with a view of enabling ministers to make advances to our allies if we shall be compelled to persevere in the war. At the same time, we are not to consider such sums as lost to the country. We have seen too many of those qualities, the inherent companions of good faith and honour, displayed in the recent exertions of his imperial majesty, to entertain any suspicions with respect to his conduct. And we may confidently hope for the happiest result in the present contest from his courage and perseverance, fed by our resources and supported by our constancy. On this ground I proposed the vote of three millions. I shall add nothing farther on the subject of army extraordinaries.

On the subject of navy debt, it was my desire and expectation that a full and perfect account should have been laid upon the table, so as to have given to the committee a distinct idea of the whole amount for the year. I find, however, that the account has not been presented entire. I am able to state roundly what it is expected to amount to, from the progress that has been already made, and as it is laid before the house:

The net amount of the navy debt up to the 30th

November appears to be . . . . . £.13,171,000

To which add, as the probable sum to the 31st

December, 1796 . . . . . 1,000,000

Add to this, the sum of navy debt first funded . . . . . 4,414,000

And the amount of the navy debt on the 31st

December, 1796, will be in all . . . . . 20,585,000

On the 31st December, 1795, it amounted to . . . . . 12,362,000

So that the debt incurred in 1796 is . . . . . 8,223,000

I foresaw and provided for . . . . . 4,000,000

It has therefore exceeded my estimate, by . . . . . £.4,223,000



and it is my duty to explain how this excess has happened ; not that I mean to shelter myself from the imputation of error, so difficult to avoid in a calculation so extremely large ; but to shew, as far as it is in my power, that it arose from circumstances which I could neither foresee nor prevent. The explanation will perhaps serve to convince the committee that we may look with perfect reliance to a diminution of these expenses for the current year.

In the first place, the expense of transports exceeded the sum which I had imagined, and which on the most mature calculations, made by persons of the greatest experience, I presented to parliament, by no less a sum than 1,300,000*l*. This arose from a variety of circumstances which no human foresight could anticipate, and which, though the most to be regretted, are the easiest to be excused. By the unfortunate vicissitudes of weather, by the delays and disasters which unfortunately happened to our expeditions ; by the quantity of transports that were necessary to be taken up in consequence of these things, and by the new regulations of this board not being brought into perfect activity.

Another head of expense which has occurred, and which it was impossible to foresee, was the sum incurred for foreign transports, in order to bring into our own ports stores and provisions, which might otherwise have fallen into the hands of the enemy ; for the high demurrage which we have been obliged to pay, and to which our courts of admiralty, however reluctantly, have found it just and equitable to submit. By these causes the expense of foreign transports, demurrage, &c. has amounted to 900,000*l*.

Another head of unforeseen expense was the unprecedented discount to which the navy bills fell, and which operated so injuriously upon commerce and on public circulation. On this head of discount there has been paid no less than the sum of 600,000*l*. Thus, therefore, the committee will see that in three articles only, which it was impossible to anticipate, there has been expended near 3,000,000*l*. ; and when they take in-

to their farther consideration the circumstances of our having a new maritime enemy to encounter, and also a threatened invasion to repel, for which measures of precaution have been taken, it will not be thought that the sum of 4,200,000*l.* above my calculation is a very remarkable error. The practical use that we must draw, however, from the fact certainly is, not to avoid all estimates, but to make our estimates with as much correctness as possible, at the same time claiming a large, though discreet, indulgence for unforeseen circumstances; and in the statement of the supply I think I have made ample provision for the naval exertions of the year, even if the obstinacy of the enemy should oblige us to continue those exertions through the whole of the year. The committee will recollect that there has been already voted—

Under the head of navy, . . . . .	£.7,660,000
To which I added the farther sum of . . . . .	2,500,000
Making together the sum of . . . . .	10,160,000
And to this I now add, for which I have also made provision, the probable sum of . . . . .	3,000,000
Total of navy for the year 1797 . . . . .	£.13,160,000

which the committee will see, if they deduct the sums that have been paid under the head of transports, foreign freights for the bringing home of flour, &c. together with demurrage, and the amount of the discounts on the navy bills, (all articles which are not likely to recur) is fully equal to the expenditure of the last year, which, with all these unforeseen accidents, was 15,212,000*l.*

In stating these estimates I have endeavoured to bring forward to the view of the committee all the information which they can possibly desire on the subject. I have stated in its utmost extent the scale of expenditure which it may be necessary to incur, if we shall still be called to persevere in a contest con-



connected with our honour, our happiness, our independence, and safety. I trust that I have said enough on this topic, and that if the alternative should be presented, the British nation would need no incentive to support such a contest with vigour and perseverance, rather than submit to protracted misery, evaded mischief, and certain disgrace. Such, undoubtedly, will be their conduct, if they wish to maintain the character which they inherit from their ancestors, or to transmit the privileges they enjoy undiminished to their posterity. In this period of the war (God grant that it may be short!) it is still matter of much congratulation, under all we have suffered, under all the accumulated difficulties arising from a contest as unexampled in its exertions, as transcendently important in its objects, and notwithstanding the violent and unnatural means employed by the enemy, that, by opposing to them the constant fruits of regular industry, protected by a system of civil order, we have been able to meet the exigency of the crisis, and to provide ample resources for every branch of the public service. If, after four years of war, not only the permanent revenue is not effected, but even the new taxes are found to be fully productive; if the state of internal industry and domestic improvement exhibit a picture of prosperity, which would amaze incredulity, if it did not address itself to observation, we have surely great and solid ground of satisfaction. I have formerly had occasion to describe the highly flourishing situation of our commerce, which, even under circumstances the most unfavourable, has increased with astonishing and unexampled rapidity. It is with infinite pleasure I am enabled to state that the receipts of the last quarter fully confirm the symptoms of our growing prosperity; and if those of the other quarters increase in the same proportion, the whole exports for the year will amount to thirty millions. This flourishing state of our affairs ought not to lessen our moderation, or abate our desire for peace. But that peace is not worthy of the name which is not calculated to afford internal and external security, to preserve to us the blessings of our constitution, to protect the operations of our industry, and to



maintain the dignity of the British character among foreign nations. It is the restoration of such a peace which alone is truly desirable, and in seeking which, we ought to be careful not to mistake the phantom for the reality. .

I beg pardon for not being able to with-hold the expression of my feelings on this subject. They are feelings which want not to be enforced by words. They are the feelings of the British nation spoken by substantial acts, evinced by the most unequivocal displays of zeal, the most liberal exertions in aid of the public cause, and supported by powerful and ample resources. It is my most fervent wish that the spirit of Britain may be an example to other countries, that her resources may ever keep pace with her zeal, and her perseverance be crowned with the most distinguished success. I now move, Sir, "that towards raising the supply granted to his Majesty, the sum of 18,000,000*l.* be raised by annuities."

The several resolutions were afterwards put and carried, and the report of the committee was ordered to be received on the following day,

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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The several resolutions were afterwards put and carried, and the report of the committee was ordered to be received on the following day.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

















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522	Speeches in the House of
P45	Commons
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